

CREATING NEW INSTITUTION: TRANSFORMING CONGREGATIONS

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by
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has been presented to and accepted by the
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partial fulfillment of the requirements of the

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Abstract

This project seeks to answer the question: Is it possible for a congregation to transcend their current institutional structure creating a new church structure, that better serves a diverse and inclusive congregation while maintaining core values and denominational identity that will reflect the congregation's current context, theology and culture? The question is grounded in a belief evolving from my experience leading congregations through transformation processes. In my experience these congregations transform through a shift in the worship experience, a streamlining of the board, and almost always a re-branding of titles for positions and committee. These changes bring renewed energy, and new people creating a transformation, but without transcending the old institutional values. Once the congregation reaches a level of transformation where they feel renewed a change back mindset creeps in. The same rules for leadership, service and membership apply. Old institutional values are placed on new congregants. New congregants often feel blind-sided by the shift. Lured in with the promise of something different only to find that underneath the surface the old values are alive and well.

This project has created a process will help the congregation identify and analyze old institutional values. Using two strands of new institutionalism, historical and sociological as lenses for analysis, a time line is created that reveals the congregational, cultural and denominational history. The timeline is used to help identify cultural and historical context that was influential in how the churches institutional values developed.

Author Edward H. Hammett uses the metaphor of disease or infection to describe the church in his book *Recovering Hope for your Church*. His premise is that one can treat an infection or disease, but if the underlying causes are not addressed, the body will never be fully healed. I

posit that it is not enough for the church to transform. Transformation is a way of treating a disease, but in order for the church to fully heal, the old institutional structure must be dismantled and a new structure built.¹

¹ Edward H. Hammett, *Recovering Hope for Your Church: Moving Beyond Maintenance and Missional to Incarnational Engagement* (St. Louis, MO: CBP publishing, 2014).

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Introduction

Church is a puzzle that people have struggled to solve since its inception. Even the inception is a mystery. How far back should we look? The first century church of the apostles? Jesus ministry in the gospels? Dare we consider the structure of first century Judaism? Or perhaps we accept the council of Nicaea in 325 BCE as the official start date. Or was Nicaea the beginning of institutionalized Christianity? Is it possible to separate institutionalized Christianity from the church? What exactly is church? These are the questions that drive ministry with my congregation as we work to transcend the current institutional structure that has been church for more than ten decades. Central to this project is the question: Is it possible for a congregation to transcend the current institutional structure creating a new church structure, that serves a diverse and inclusive congregation while maintaining core values and denominational identity that will reflect the congregation's current context, theology and culture?

I have spent the entirety of my ministry as an ordained clergy with The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), or Disciples as we refer to ourselves, working on congregational transformation. In my first two positions I was hired to help create new worship experiences that were creative and vibrant and would be attractive to younger people who were either church damaged or had no church history. As a result, I decided to receive formal training as a new church planter and a coach for new church planters and transforming congregations. In 2010, I was called to serve First Christian Church in Olympia, Washington as a pastor/planter. They were a congregation uncertain of their future and not sure whether they were dying or transforming. The years working in my first two settings, followed by my current setting in Olympia, have given me some insight and raised questions for me about the methods we use in transforming congregations. Creating a new worship experience or streamlining boards and

getting rid of committees isn't enough when the underlying institutional structure pulls everything back into a values system that is no longer relevant to the current context.

Sociologist Robert Wuthnow says this about spirituality and church in our current context,

At the start of the twentieth century, virtually all Americans practiced their faith within a Christian or Jewish framework. They were cradle to grave members of their particular traditions, and their spirituality prompted them to attend services and to believe in the teachings of their churches and synagogues. Organized religion dominated their experience of spirituality, especially when it was reinforced by ethnic loyalties and when it was expressed in family rituals. Even at midcentury, when the religious revival of the 1950s brought millions of new members to local congregations, many of these patterns prevailed. Now, at the end of the twentieth century, growing numbers of Americans piece together their faith like a patchwork quilt. Spirituality has become a vastly complex quest in which each person seeks in his or her own way.²

Wuthnow identifies the concept of membership as being one of the major factors that deter many from participating in congregational life. His research shows that since the 1950s the United States has moved from being a society based in place to a more transient culture. We are less likely to be a cradle to grave member of any organization and in fact are leery of joining any institution that would require us putting too deep of roots down – church especially. Wuthnow suggests that spirituality in America has moved from being spirituality of dwelling to spirituality of seeking. People no longer stay in one place their entire lives. Not unlike the ancient Israelites who following the first destruction of the temple in Jerusalem had to learn and trust that God was with them even in the diaspora, people in the post- modern era are learning to seek God outside of the institutional structures of the past.

Findley Edge - author, Christian educator, professor, and chair of Religious Education at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1947 until 1984 – recognized that although

² Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 2.

churches were enjoying record number membership and appeared to be thriving there was something very wrong. He wrote in his book *A Quest for Vitality in Religion* first published in 1963, “at the present time churches are experiencing a period of almost unparalleled popularity and prosperity. Such a situation normally would be the basis for unrestrained optimism and rejoicing. Strangely, such is not the case. Many thoughtful religious leaders and mature Christian laypersons evidence a growing ferment of uneasiness and concern.”³ Edge was concerned that modern Christianity was becoming too concerned with self-preservation of the Church rather than focused on spiritual matters and helping people become more connected to God. He believed the church was too interested in numbers rather than prayer, spiritual renewal, and connecting to the world outside the walls of the church building.

From the vantage point of the 21st century, in the wake of a steady decline of church membership across all mainline protestant denominations it certainly would seem that Findley Edge understood the danger of institutional structure becoming more important than the institutional values and mission. According to the Pew Research Center, mainline denominations have been in steady decline for decades.⁴ The World Council of Churches membership data show that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), like most other mainline denominations peaked in 1958 boasting a membership of nearly two million. By 1968 they had shrunk by 500,000 and by 2018 have just over 350,000. It also shows that the number of congregations has

³ Findley B. Edge, *A Quest for Vitality in Religion: A Theological Approach to Religious Education*, revised ed. (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publisher, 1994), xiii.

⁴ “The Changing Religious Composition of the U.S.,” in *American’s Changing Religious Landscape* (Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015) [Pewforum.org](http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/chapter-1-the-changing-religious-composition-of-the-u-s/), May 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/chapter-1-the-changing-religious-composition-of-the-u-s/>.

declined from just over 8000 to 3000. Interestingly enough while membership and congregations have dwindled the number of clergy has only decreased by about 2000 from 1958 to present.⁵

In 2000, Dr. Richard Hamm, who was the General minister and president of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), implemented a plan called *20/20 Vision* calling for the creation of 2000 new congregations by the year 2020. In 2001 the book *20/20 Vision* was published. Hamm saw the decline in membership and the closing of congregations as a wake-up call for the Disciples to be more assertive in initiating church growth. In *2020 Vision* he lays out a plan for creating new church and transforming church. He identifies three values that become the heart of the vision: true community, a deep Christian spirituality, and a passion for justice..⁶ I believe these make for an excellent foundation for restructure. The problem becomes the implementation. By placing so much focus on numbers – 2000 new congregations by 2020 – it has made it difficult for congregations, the General Ministries, pastors and new church planters to think beyond the current structure. By focusing on numbers our focus remains on faithful preservation of the institution rather than being faithful to the gospel.

According to data on church planting from the Presbyterian Church in America only 68% of church plants survive beyond one year. If a plant stays open until year three the survivability increases to 81%.⁷ I surmise that it is denominational institutional structure that makes it difficult for most of the new church plants to succeed. Within the Disciples of Christ, I have been witness to almost all new church plants closing after the first two years. In most cases they lost funding

⁵ “Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Membership Data” (Association of Religion Data Archives, April 4, 2019), http://www.thearda.com/Denoms/D_1071.asp.

⁶ Richard Hamm, *2020 Vision for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001).

⁷ ED Stetzer and Phillip Connor, “Research Report: Church Plant Survivability and Health Study 2007,” Mission to North America Presbyterian Church in America, 2007, <https://pcamna.org/churchplanting/documents/CPMainReport.pdf>.

and support from the Regional and National church because they did not hold a structure that fit within the institutional model of those regions and the general church. Institutional models whose foundation was laid in the 1960s based on values and ideals from the 1950s.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) did not officially become a denomination until 1968. The same year marks the beginning of a steady decline. This seems to be in keeping with Robert Wuthnow's premise that society moved from a spirituality of dwelling in the 1950s to a spirituality of seeking through the 1960s until today. It begs the question what is wrong with the structure and what can we do to change?

It is my hypothesis based on lived experience and research from scholars such as Wuthnow and Edge that while society and culture has drastically changed over the past 60 plus years our church structure has remained unchanged. The drastic drop in church membership, and congregational decline, and cultural change support the need for a dismantling of the current institutional model and the building of a new institutional structure.

My objective in this project is to help my current congregation – First Christian Church (FCC) Olympia, Washington which is part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) fully transform. I hope that by creating a new institution within my congregation it will be beneficial to the wider denomination.

Background

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Olympia, Washington has a similar story to many other congregations of its size and age within our denomination. In the height of its glory, 1950's and 60's, the church boasted an active membership of 500 with total membership close to

800. There were plenty of young families with young children, an adequate amount of elderly to lend advice and wisdom, and youth galore. The church functioned not only as a place of worship, but as a place for social connection. Small groups were formed to fit the needs and tastes of every congregant – sewing, reading, dance, young couples, singles, parenting, etc. Church was central to most people's lives and offered a certain amount of status in the community. During the 1970's and 80's a decline began. It was subtle. No drastic drop in numbers, but enough for the leadership to begin conversations around survival. In the early 1980's the congregation did a major renovation to their sanctuary hoping that it would be more attractive to new people. During the 1990s First Christian had a noticeable decline averaging around 125 in worship. They still had a youth program and Sunday school for young children, but early in 2000 the congregation was down to 75 in worship with almost no youth or children.

Recognizing that they were in a downward spiral, church leadership hired a consulting group through the denomination who could lead them through an assessment process. The process took a total of 3 years culminating in the decision to call a new church planter.

I was called in 2010 as a pastor/planter. Upon arrival, I found an active congregation of 25 people, (most well over 70). I was tasked with spending 20% of my time with the existing congregation and 80% of my time starting a new church using their resources. The congregation had come to terms with the fact that they would need to die in order to have a legacy.

During my first year, I led the congregation through a listening process. Through that process, we came to understand that God still had a vision for First Christian Church. Our presence as a downtown congregation was important and there was vital ministry for us to do. Together we moved beyond the walls of the church, we began to see ourselves as part of a whole community rather than a small isolated group. Our ministries and mission began to flourish.

Since 2010 we have grown from a congregation of 25 to a congregation of over 100, with an average worship attendance of 75.

The congregation has transformed from a dying congregation turned inward to a thriving congregation focused outward. We have planted a new church within the old church and are on the brink of flourishing. Preventing the congregation from full transformation are the current by-laws and governance structure. The by-laws have been revised over the years, but the basic structure of how the church functions has never changed. It is built on the ideas of institution as it existed when the church was organized in 1891 and re-organized in 1925.

Eleven years ago, when the congregation was undergoing the discernment process, they streamlined the board eliminating positions and committees until the board was made up of eight people rather than fifty people. This was helpful in lessening the burden of the nominating committee each year as they desperately (and somewhat hopelessly) tried to fill an unrealistic number of positions. But it did not address a core issue – the structure of governance itself.

It is my belief that the current structure, based on old institutional ideas, will always direct the congregation back into old institution ways. To fully flourish we need to create a new institutional model grounded within our denominational identity and core values that frees us from the burdens of a structure based on principles and ideas that no longer make sense for our current context.

First Christian Church is in the Pacific North West. The most unchurched section of our country.⁸ Olympia, Washington is the state capitol, and is made up of a diverse group of mostly liberal progressives who pride themselves on being anti-establishment and non-religious. There is a strong sentiment against organized religion. Most people will claim to be “spiritual, but not

⁸ Patricia O'Connell Killen, “The Religious Geography of the Pacific North West,” *Word & World* 24, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 269–78.

religious.” The Evergreen State College is in Olympia. While there are students who participate in religious organizations, most claim to be “closeted” about their participation because people have such strong anti-church sentiment. People I speak to about religion as institution tell me they have a great mistrust for the institution based on history, personal experience and what they hear in politics and media. New congregants tend to be less interested in the governance of church and more interested in worship and mission. As the last of the original congregation age out it has become almost impossible to maintain the current model of institution.

I have identified three basic assumptions within the current structure that must be changed to create an institutional structure that works for our current context and will offer flexibility to adapt into future context. First - church is the center of life. While church remains central to the lives of the older generation who grew up within the church most of our newer congregants do not need church to be the center of their lives. They have active and highly scheduled lives. They are looking for a meaningful worship experience and a way to do mission – to make a difference in the world. They don’t need or want the church to provide social events and entertainment.

Second– it is highly desired and a privilege to serve the church in any capacity. In the Olympian context church is not a high desire or privilege. Most of our new folks are struggling with how to confess to family and friends that they attend worship. What they most desire from the church is that it be an institution in which they can be proud to say they participate. They want the church to be bold in how it serves the neediest, the vulnerable, the marginalized. They have a desire to tell their friends and family that we are different than the institutional church that has caused so much harm in the past. Third – membership is required to serve. Membership is a concept that holds very little relevance in today’s context. People harbor great suspicion of

institutions in general. That suspicion translates to a dislike for the institutional church. In my tenure at First Christian Olympia I have had hundreds of conversations with people who say, “I like Jesus, I hate church. Christians don’t follow Jesus.” The idea of joining the church as a member is off putting and a hindrance for many of our newer and younger congregants.

Over the past eight years FCC has grown. The willingness of the original twenty five people to die to live has been a gift and a blessing to the legacy of FCC. For the first time in my eight year tenure the board is made up of completely new leadership. Every member of the board is of working age. The dynamics of leadership is drastically different. The younger and newer people tend to ask questions like “what can we do to make our community, and our world, better.” Or “what needs to happen to change something quickly with the fewest number of meetings.” They like action, and they are inspired by mission. They do not respond to excessive meetings, committees and long-term commitments. Most of these congregants feel connected through mission and worship. They do not feel the need to be a member and join committees. They like to serve, but they don’t want to be saddled with a long-term commitment. They do not look to the church to provide social activities. Whereas the older folks think we should be doing more potlucks and social things. Our older folks are not necessarily interested in participating in these activities – unless they are during the daytime – but they believe this is the way to “keep” new people. Where the newer congregants feel connected through worship and mission, the older feel connected through serving on committee and socialization.

The problem is that the demands of the current structure hinder us from fully utilizing the creativity and energies of our newer people. It is time to create a new institutional structure that frees us from old concepts. We have two congregations. The new congregants and the old

members. We need an institutional structure that recognizes both and allows us to do ministry in a more effective way.

Like a caterpillar who slowly cocoons itself dangling from a limb in order to become something new, First Christian Olympia has risked change. It spent three years in a process that would lead them to a transformation process. During the process they have changed. The church looks different, it feels different, it acts differently than before. They are now at a stage that will require them to open the wings they have grown, flap, fly and transcend into the congregation God asks them to be in this present context. The goal of this project is to help create the process for that transcendence to occur.

Theological and Theoretical /conceptual stance

My theology undergirding the need for institutional change is grounded in process and liberation theology. We are in a relationship with God – always. Even those who do not profess a belief in God. God is with them. I believe that all people are created in the image of God. I believe that each person reflects God. We are meant to be in relationship with one another. God calls us into community, and asks us to be open to one another, and to recognize the divine presence within each other. The Institutional Church should be a part of creating the realm of God here and now. If the structure pushes people away and prevents people from fully participating in the fullness, abundance, mystery and wonder that is God's Realm then the structure needs to change. Church should be a tool for empowering people. When the institutional structure is set up in a way that causes division, keeps a child of God from full

inclusion, and restricts the collective imagination, it is at odds with the call to bring the realm here and now, therefore it must change.

Methods

This is a case study in emergent ecclesiology. Designing a process by which First Christian Church can discern its future, and create a structure that allows them to grow, and to live into its current mission, while offering enough flexibility for change as time, context and Spirit lead them in the future.

The project will begin with library research. Using the resources identified within the preliminary bibliography, as well as other sources to be discovered, I will construct a process for dialogue, discernment, and action to be used by core congregational leadership, and eventually the congregation in creating a new church structure. Drawing on models of change theory originating with the social scientist Kurt Lewin I have identified three categories for change: Membership, Leadership, Stewardship.⁹ I will design conversations for core leadership that focus on each of these categories. Within each category will be a basic structure that remains the same for each category with additional questions for dialogue that focus on specific areas within the category. For example: Each category will include a section on denominational, and congregational history. I will create historical timelines that map the denominational history, cultural and societal history along with congregational history and where it falls within the bigger timeline. What was the cultural, political and religious climate in Olympia, Washington when First Christian Church (FCC) was formed? What was happening in the world at large? Where does FCC fall within the denominational formation? How does the history inform where

⁹ Alicia Kritsonis, "Comparison of Change Theories," *International Journal of Scholarly Academic Intellectual Diversity* 8, no. 1 (2005 2004): 1–7.

we are today? Can we find inspiration, courage and empowerment for change from our history? What did membership mean in the forming context? What does it mean today?

I have spent the last year sifting through the archives of First Christian Church to discover and uncover its history. I have laid some of the ground work for the history piece through a weekly teaching during worship called Disciples 1.0 and Disciples 2.0. I will be using that research and teachings I designed for worship as the base for the historical piece within my project. The premise for the process is that in order to know where we are going, we must know where we have been. I believe that understanding the history is foundational and key to a successful future.

The second foundational piece within the process will be the power of story. Understanding our history is essential. It is our story. The invitation will be that each participant tell their story. Does their story connect with FCC? If so, how? If not, what does understanding the narrative of FCC spark within them? What is their personal story? What can FCC change to make their story feel heard and equal to any other? Quaker peace activist, mystic and founder of the Compassionate Listening Project Gene Knudsen Hoffman wrote, “an enemy is one whose story we have not heard.”¹⁰ I believe that if we are to create a new structure that holds the flexibility, compassion and ability to include all people, it needs to be grounded in story. That begins with curiosity, listening and creating safe space for people to speak honestly and authentically. My project is to develop a process that will engage the congregation in listening with compassion to our history, to ourselves and to those who have yet to come by focusing on three areas of our current structure: Membership, Leadership, Stewardship. This will create the fertile ground needed for the collective imagination to re-imagine what church can be.

¹⁰ Gene Knudsen Hoffman, “Compassionate Listening Project,” January 29, 2018, www.compassionatelistening.org.

Scope and Limitations

My goal is for the congregation to design and implement a new institutional structure. It is unrealistic to believe that this can be done within the constraints of time for this project. I anticipate that the full process will take at a minimum one year to implement. Therefore, this project is limited to creating the process by which change can take place.

Chapter 2

DNA: Coded for Change

First Christian Church of Olympia has a 127-year history of taking great risks. However, the current congregational memory does not hold knowledge of any history beyond their personal experience. There is a church archive housing some historical information, and there is a small booklet that was written in 1991 as part of their centennial celebration. The vault – a dark small room in the basement of the church, which once was the holding place for the old coal furnace – is home to the archival materials. Very few people within the current congregation know that it exists. Over the past eight years a handful of people have ventured into the basement and discovered the archives. One or two have expressed interest in sifting through all of the papers and photos in order to create a useable library of the congregation's history, but for differing reasons never followed through. One copy of the centennial booklet can be found on a shelf in the church library. It remains in pristine condition evidence that no one has opened its pages in 27 years.

Officially FCC incorporated in 1892, but its roots go further back. In 1862 husband and wife, Alfred Ridgely and Martha Elder moved to Olympia, from the Oregon area. They migrated to the Northwest from Kentucky where they had been a part of the Restoration movement. Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone, two of the four founding fathers of what would become the

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The significant tenants of faith of the Restoration movement were open communion (a ritual practiced at every gathering) focused on the New Testament teachings, and no creeds. According to church historian Jerry Rushford the church died out at some point prior to 1890 and was revived by a man named John Pray.¹¹ Moving to Olympia with his family, Pray searched for a “simple New Testament order” congregation. Finding none he cleverly went to the local post office and inquired about names of people who were receiving The Christian Standard – a monthly publication that focused on the Restoration movement (also known today as the Stone-Campbell movement). He learned that there were five families, most likely the remnants of Ridgley and Elder’s gatherings. Pray contacted all five families and was delighted to learn that they were all interested in gathering. They began meeting in homes for simple communion services.¹²

By 1891, they had grown in number adding a state representative who was also a part time preacher from Yakima, Washington - Jacob Eshelman. Eshelman agreed to preach for them when the legislature was in session. It was under Eshelman’s leadership that the growing congregation formally organized on March 1, 1891. At that time, they had grown to be about 50 members, and were renting space in a Hall within the downtown area. In October of 1891 they leased a piece of land not too far from where they were meeting. They raised enough capital to build a simple structure for worship and a small parsonage for a newly called pastor – Rev. James McCallum. five years passed, and the lease expired on the land. The little congregation voted to extend their lease by one year. Struggling financially, they made a brave and risky

¹¹Charles Dailey, “Pioneer History: Thurston County, Washington,” Northwest College of the Bible, February 1, 2001, accessed [February 4, 2019], <http://ncbible.org/nwh/WaThurston.html>.

¹²Jim Lawson, *100 Years of Christian Witness: A History of The First Christian Church, Olympia, Washington* (Olympia, WA: First Christian Church, 1991), 1.

decision. The congregation bought a piece of land across town, and physically moved both the church structure, and the parsonage to the new site. Only 50 in number they made another risky decision voting to expand the building to accommodate 300 people before moving in.

Demonstrating an early desire to be ecumenical they worshiped at the Unity church of Olympia during the move and construction,

The FCC congregation began to thrive and by 1902, 10 years after its incorporation, the congregation was financially sound, and had grown considerably in numbers. By 1921 they had begun plans to construct a new building on a piece of land purchased a few blocks from their old site. This is the place of worship today. Completed in 1926, it was the vision of their pastor the Reverend Bussabarger who was so invested in constructing a new building that he took a personal loan against his pension in order to secure the funding needed to proceed. He also had a great deal of influence on the design of the building. He and his wife traveled back east in search of ideas - resulting in First Christian Church being built in the style of Gothic Revival. (Today the building is on the Thurston county historical registry as the only Gothic Revival church in Olympia.) Reverend Bussabarger led the congregation through the construction process shepherding them toward community outreach, mission, and growth. By the end of his tenure in 1930 the church was flourishing. With more than 300 members Bussabarger had managed to be instrumental in shaping the mission mindedness of the congregation: ecumenism, community involvement, and interfaith foundations. Interestingly, once the new building was complete – in all its grandeur and prominent location on the square, the heart of downtown – the congregational history becomes rather mundane. The focus shifts from visioning and hope to counting numbers. Reading the archives from the 1930's through 1954 is like reading a page out of the Wall Street Journal. Ledgers filled with numbers: How much money, who is giving, who

is not; How many members, new members, baptisms, confessions of faith, confirmations; Weekly attendance in worship, in Sunday school, youth group, young adult groups, men's group, women's group, potlucks, dances etc. These numbers reveal that Church was the center of life and First Christian was central to the community. It was at its peak. This would last through the 1950's. With the exception of a financial set back during World War II.

Rationing took a toll on the congregation's finances. Young men were being sent off to war. The women were keeping things together at home. There is an interesting story of how the women of the church stepped into leadership during these times. At one point the congregation did not have enough money to purchase communion supplies. Cutting communion from worship was unthinkable and against the most basic tenant of faith for Disciples. The women came together and decided that in order to have communion on Sunday's they would make wine and bake bread. During the war, communion happened every Sunday thanks to the women's house wine and homemade bread. Following the war things returned to normal. Men returned to leadership, the coffers filled again, the numbers went back up, and store-bought wine and bread came back in fashion.

1955 was a record year. The church youth group had grown considerably, and the congregation voted to appoint a minister for Christian Education. They also pledged over \$100,000 toward building expansion. By 1956 under the leadership of a newly called pastor, the Reverend Delbert Daniels, they began to create plans for a new addition to the building. Ground breaking would not take place until 1962 under the leadership of a new pastor Rev. Teddy Turner. The church in the 1960's underwent a great deal of change in response to cultural change happening all over the country. FCC grappled with the changing role of church in relation to society. Rev. Turner said his primary response to a changing world was to focus his ministerial

talent on, “expanding the congregation’s understanding of Christian faith and the role of the Church in Society.”¹³ The new building addition, modernizing the old building, and renaming position titles was part of his strategy. He began calling the custodian -the minister of sacred property, the choir director became – the minister of sacred music. The congregation remembers this as a humorous approach to ministry. The new addition was completed in 1966.

In 1969 – a year after the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was officially restructured at the national level -the Reverend Turner resigned, and the Rev. George Mitchell was called. Rev. Mitchell focused the congregation’s attention on the question of, how will we make decisions as a congregation? Up till this time the congregation had two separate boards and every decision made had to pass through a voting process of both boards. It was laborious and time consuming to get anything done. Mitchell led them in the creation of one general church board, thereby streamlining the decision-making processes. This required a complete overhaul of the bylaws. The boards were essentially combined with a few new member additions making the general board’s membership fifty. Mitchell also urged the congregation to consider selling their building and moving into the newly forming suburbs. After careful deliberation and prayer, the congregation voted and in an almost unanimous decision they agreed to stay downtown focusing their attention on the needs of their surrounding area. Once this decision was made Mitchell encouraged them to do a complete renovation of Koinonia Hall (the new addition added in 1966). A stage at the end of the hall was removed and the space was repurposed as the church office. They also divided the hall so that one end was carpeted with the ability to be closed off from the other to provide more usable space for gatherings, meetings, and classes. During this period between 1969 and 1974 many new programs began, including The Thurston County Food

¹³ Lawson, *100 Years of Christian Witness*, 3.

Bank, and Associated Ministries of Thurston county, the Olympia Child Care Center, and the Thurston County Clothing Bank. They added an associate position that was responsible for expanding youth programming, Christian Education and Community Service. While the Reverend Paul Davidson, who filled the position, was able to create a number of community programs, including those listed above, he also created an extensive youth program. Unfortunately, the congregational budget could not sustain the position, and in 1974, he was released from his contract and the line item in the budget was cut. Throughout the 1970's, the congregation continued to build community and congregational programs while financially struggling.

In 1981, George Mitchell resigned, and in 1982 the Reverend Arla Elston was called. Rev. Elston was not only the first woman to be called in a senior role at First Christian Olympia, she was also the first woman pastor in the entire county from any denomination. Not recorded in our church archives or written history, preserved only through oral history, are the challenges and threats from the wider community that the congregation faced with a full-time woman pastor. They received threatening phone calls from angry men in the county proclaiming the end of the world because women were not to serve as clergy. The elders of the congregation took it in stride and defended with great vehemence and theological grounding the congregation's decision to call a woman. In fact, the elder's had expanded to include women during this time. This was an important step that was the first step in the congregation's decision to become open and affirming twenty eight years later. By the end of 1984, FCC decided they were ready to add an associate position once more. Under Elston's leadership, they were intentional about hiring a person of color. In January of 1986, Sarasopa Enari, a candidate for ordination, was called. He was ordained in 1987. By 1988 the congregation was experiencing financial difficulty once more and once again the associate position was eliminated. With great sadness they had to release

Sarasopa Enari from his contract. In a decision that was consistent with their history of risk in times of financial difficulty, the congregation decided it was time for yet another remodel. Late 1988, they began a capital campaign to raise funds to do a major remodel of the sanctuary. They secured a loan from the Church Foundation (a ministry of the General Church) along with a generous matching funds donation from a member. When all was said and done, they spent over \$250,000 on renovations.¹⁴

By the time Rev. Elston retired in 1994, First Christian was stable, but smaller than the 300 members it boasted in the mid 1950's. Average worship attendance at the time Arla left was about 100. By 1997 the congregation was experiencing some conflict over inclusion of people who were considered "street people" in worship. They also disagreed over whether to add an associate minister for youth and education. There was a thriving, lay led, children and youth ministry in place. When a decision was made by the board and supported by the minister to add an associate position for children and family ministry the congregation split. Some felt it was a personal insult to the lay leadership who had been working with youth and children, others felt it was an unnecessary financial risk. By some accounts, however, there were many families who simply were uncomfortable with the congregations inclusion and acceptance of "street people" and found the division over calling an associate good timing for an exit. Several families left the church as a result. There were several more who left because the congregation allowed full participation by a person whom they deemed "unfit." By 2000 membership was down to 70 active.

In 2004, the congregation was averaging 35 in worship. While they had financial reserves, the lay leaders were becoming increasingly concerned about the fate of the congregation. Several

¹⁴ Lawson, *100 Years of Christian Witness*, 23.

leaders attended workshops held by the Regional church addressing issues of decline and transformation. Returning from those workshops they were convinced that First Christian Church was in decline. Fearing that their fate would be like many congregations within the region who had waited too long to do anything and as a result had closed, First Christian Church decided to be proactive. The leadership took the initiative to reach out to the General Church for help. They spent two years consulting with the national church ministry before finally deciding to undertake a whole congregational discernment – New Beginnings. During the two years they were in discussions with themselves, the congregation was approached by Panza – a non-profit organization that had been quickly organized to support Camp Quixote. Camp Quixote was a city sanctioned tent encampment that grew from a protest movement downtown. After a long and intense stand- off between people experiencing homelessness and the Olympia police department, the city council passed an ordinance to legalize an encampment as long as it was on a faith-based organization's property. The Camp Quixote was to be completely self-governed. Panza was created in order to help raise funds, and to offer support to the camp – often times this meant being advocates for the campers. In the role of advocate Panza approached FCC to ask if they would consider allowing the camp to move into the church parking lot in November of 2007, the beginning of the rainy season. First Christian has a unique parking lot that is underneath the building, but not completely closed off. Allowing the camp to move in would mean that the camp residents would be warm and dry during the wettest months of the year. The church board was unsure. The congregation was split. Uncertain of their own future, questioning whether they would survive another five years, the congregation was frightened that housing a homeless tent encampment would make them less appealing to potential new members than they already believed they had become. They feared that hosting Camp Quixote would hasten their

death. Through the persistence of lay leadership and the guidance from their minister, Reverend Mary Olney-Lloyd who asked, why not say yes? in spite of their fear, they agreed to host the camp. What they did not know was that this decision (they believed would be their demise) would hold the seed for congregational re-birth. Camp Quixote spent every winter in FCC's parking lot. In 2010, I was called as the new church planter/pastor. At that time other congregations in the area had grown weary of hosting the camp. Several members of the congregation were now members of Panza (including myself). Panza began to advocate that the city council change the ordinance restricting the amount of time the camp could stay on one site. In 2011, a change was made. The ordinance was amended to increase the time from 90 days to 6 months. FCC proudly hosted the camp until December 24th, 2013 when the Camp moved into its permanent home and became Quixote Village.¹⁵

2009 the Olympia Salvation Army closed its family homeless shelter. Suddenly there were approximately 20 families with nowhere to go out on the streets of Olympia. The Family Support Center – a local organization that provides services to low-income families, contacted First Christian Church to see if they would be willing to provide space in their basement. The basement had once been home to the day care center, and served as Sunday school classrooms, but had been empty for many years. Several lay leaders - feeling inspired by the collaboration with Camp Quixote and recognizing an opportunity to serve children and families in a new way – urged congregational leadership to consider a partnership with the Family Support Center. Late 2009 the basement was opened as a temporary shelter for families in need. In 2010 the congregation voted to become a permanent site for the shelter. Their experience with the Camp had opened the door to more openness and community involvement. It was another courageous

¹⁵ “Quixote Village,” accessed [November 5, 2018], quixotevillage.com/history/faqs/.

step in moving beyond fear. The Family Support Shelter would be housed at First Christian Church for 5 years at which time the city donated a building to the organization along with a City Block Grant. On June 27, 2014 the re-named family shelter opened as Pear Blossom Place.¹⁶ Once again First Christian had space available in its basement. Almost immediately several groups approached the church vying congregational support for their projects. A partnership was made between Interfaith Works and First Christian Church to open a year-round shelter that would serve the most vulnerable adults in the homeless community. Although fear was present – the thought of housing 42 adult men and women with physical and mental health challenges was daunting – the decision came more easily than those of previous years. November 1, 2014 the Interfaith Works Shelter opened in the basement of First Christian Church, forming an ongoing partnership in the work to address homelessness in Olympia.¹⁷ This decision was a key step in dismantling the old institutional model that will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

In 2009 the congregation completed The New Beginnings discernment. The recommendation was made – by the consultants – that First Christian adopt a modified parallel start plan. This plan would leave the visioning and major decision making about the future of the existing congregation up to the pastor/planter. In preparation for their arrival the board was streamlined to 7 members – pared down from 20. The Elders put together a shepherding plan with the understanding that the new pastor/planter would not have time to do traditional ministry such as, tending to the sick and housebound. They focused their energies on taking care of each other. There was much uncertainty, and tremendous grief over the possibility that First Christian

¹⁶ Andy Hobbs, “New Shelter Pear Blossom Place Opens For Local Homeless Families July 1,” *The Olympian*, June 28, 2014, www.theolympian.com/news/local/article26071924. Andy Hobbs.

¹⁷ Meg Martin, “*Reflections on 4 Years of Shelter*,” *Iw Shelter* (blog), November 1, 2018, <https://www.iwshelter.org/blog>.

Church in its present form and in its present location, might come to an end. In spite of this uncertainty they continued to honor their partnerships with the Family Support Center and Camp Quixote, and to seek ways to serve. The seeds had been sown for re-birth.

2010 through the present have been years of transformation: from a dying congregation into an exciting living church; from living within the walls to outside the walls; from living in fear to starting with yes. New people have joined bringing new ideas, new leadership, fresh perspectives. As the church grows the limitations of the current structure become more evident. The new congregants struggle with the clumsiness of the old structure. They feel weighed down by a structure that does not make sense within the current context. The time has come to fully dismantle this structure so that a new institutional governance can be designed.

Identifying historical and sociological trends

“The tension exists within an institutional landscape rather than between institutions and society, and the adjustment emanates from the institutions themselves and not from society.”¹⁸

In the book *New Institutionalism* editor Andres Lecours presents a variety of approaches to new institutional engagement. Contributors to the book examine many of the strains found in new institutionalism: Historical, sociological, rational choice, empirical and normative. The fundamental difference between old institution and new institutionalism is that old institutionalism primary focus and concern is materialistic where new institutionalism’s primary focus are beliefs, values, and cognitive scripts. This is especially true in sociological institutionalism.¹⁹ Although the historical institutional strain is closer to the old institutional

¹⁸André Lecours, ed., *Studies in Comparative Political Economy and Public Policy, New Institutionalism: Theory and Analysis*, vol. 23 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 14.

¹⁹ Lecours, *New Institutionalism*, 7.

model in that it holds that institutions are formal structures and see it in terms of norms and values. The primary function of new institutionalism is to provide a method by which institutions can be analyzed for change. Therefore, it is essential to identify the strand of new institutionalism from which analysis is viewed. I propose that church institution, as it relates specifically to First Christian Church leans toward the historical. The goal is to discover a way to blend the historical and sociological in order to create a new model for church governance. Therefore, analysis of First Christian Church will be through the lens of both historical and sociological new institutionalism. Lecours describes the difference between historical and sociological in this way, “historical institutionalists tend to view ideas in terms of norms and values whose importance are a function of the material institutions from which they emanate, while sociological institutionalists conceptualize them as cognitive frameworks separate from formal structures.”²⁰

In the current old institutional model at First Christian the structure is based on the following principals:

The building - Congregational identity is tied to a materialistic understanding directly linked to the church building. If the building did not exist, the congregation would cease to exist. Historically when FCC has been faced with a challenge financially, and there was uncertainty about its future the congregation faced the challenge by expanding, updating, or remodeling the building. Historically it has been impossible for the congregation to conceive their existence separate from the current building. Even with the call of a church pastor/planter whom they believed would close the church, sell off the assets and use those resources to start a new church could they imagine themselves a part of the new. If the building was gone, the congregation was

²⁰ Lecours, 7.

gone. In 1891 they moved from a rental space, building a structure on leased property. In 1897 when the land lease was up, and their finances were not solid they purchased a piece of property and moved the church building onto the new land. Records indicate that they never paid off the full amount of the purchase agreement. Before moving into the building in spite of the fact that their finances were weak, and their membership was low they voted to expand the building to hold 300 people – 250 more than their current membership. 1928, the congregation proudly moved into their newly constructed gothic revival church building. The primary purpose for the move was a desire to be closer to the center of the city. The new location was one block closer to the town square. No longer at the center of downtown life the building remains the center of congregational identity. 1956, as they began to feel societal changes FCC began planning a new addition to the building. This addition was completed in 1967 at the beginning of major church decline. In 1974 as their finances were struggling once more and following the elimination of the associate pastor's position the congregation decided to do an update to the sanctuary. They were able to raise enough money to pay a local architecture firm to design a new cross for the sanctuary, believing that an updated more modern looking cross would entice more young families with children. 1988 the congregation – struggling financially and having just eliminated another associate pastor due to lack of funding – First Christian Church launched a capital campaign raising more than \$250,000 in order to do a major remodel of the sanctuary. Old institutionalism led them to the belief that their building was the primary attraction for membership.

Membership – belonging to the congregation is essential to the purpose and function. Membership equals responsibility, duty and privilege. Old institutional paradigm of rules, governance, values, and support grew from a time when institutions, such as: church,

government, banks, medical, media, law enforcement, education, business and military were highly respected. The country, in general, had confidence in these institutions. To be a member of an institution was indeed considered a privilege. But in the 1960's as U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war became more and more controversial, U.S. citizens trust of institution faltered. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter addressed the nation's energy crisis through a televised speech. In his speech he named America's "crisis of confidence" as a greater threat to the country than that of the energy crisis or inflation along with "growing disrespect for government and for churches and for schools, the news media and other institutions." This lack of confidence he claimed, "strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will."²¹

In its early beginnings FCC kept very few records. There are no records of membership from 1891 through 1897. During these years the congregational focus was in line with that of the restoration movement – there is a certain irony to this. Stone and Campbell's movement was essentially an effort to de-institutionalize Church at a time when denominationalism was at an all-time high. Alexander Campbell along with his father Thomas (also one of the four founders) was an Old Light Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian who migrated from Scotland. The Presbyterians, like most protestant denominations of the day, were experiencing divisions and in fighting that led to schism. In Scotland the Presbyterians had split from the Church of Scotland into two competing synods: Burgher and Anti- Burgher. The Anti- Burgher's were opposed to taking the Burgher oath which basically denied all religion that was not the state religion. The two synods split once more in 1806 forming New light and Old light. Old lights were more theologically rigid than their New light counterparts. While attending University in Glasgow, Scotland Alexander Campbell experienced first-hand how oppressive laws become

²¹ Martin Lipset Seymour and William Schneider, "The Decline of Confidence in American Institutions," *Political Science Quarterly* 98, no. 3 (Autumn 1983): 379–402.

institutionalized. There was a new practice within the Old Light Anti-burgher tradition to require a communion token be presented in order to be allowed participation in a communion service. At that time communion was offered bi-annually. In 1809 the congregation that Alexander attended began preparation for a communion service. The minister and church elders made visits to parishioner's homes to interview, observe and determine whether they were worthy of communion. If deemed worthy the parishioner was given a token. Those deemed unworthy no token was issued, and they were excluded from the service. The young Alexander Campbell was deemed worthy. It was with skepticism over this newly formed rule that Campbell decided to attend his first communion in Glasgow. His discomfort was confirmed as he witnessed the service, as described by W.A. Such:

After a protracted and solemn address upon the deep meaning of the celebration and the duties of church-members, the oldest members of the congregation were seated at the table and partook of the sacrament. Thin cakes of unleavened bread were specially prepared for the sacred service. Again, and again were the tables refilled with communicants, for often seven hundred church members were present. Thus, the services were prolonged from early morning until nightfall. When so many were to partake of the Lord's Supper, it seemed necessary to prevent any unworthy or improper person from presenting himself. Hence the tables were fenced off, and each communicant was obliged to present a 'token.'²²

After a long wait and watching Campbell's time to partake arrived. He had listened to the minister preach on the dangers of being unworthy and partaking, declaring that a person "would be made seven times more fit for the devil than before." At the same time, he warned of the sin of not partaking. "Dare ye bide away and give that affront to His Supper and frustrate the grace of God, ye take His wrath upon thee from this holy place!"²³ Campbell refused to participate exiting the church forever. When he joined his father in the United States, they began building a

²²Al Maxey, "Tale of the Tossed Token Campbell's Cast Communion Coin," *Reflections* (blog), September 2004, www.zianet.com/maxey/reflx148.htm.

²³ Maxey, "Tale of the Tossed Token."

new church movement that strived to return to the basic simple principles of Jesus ministry and teachings. The concept of membership was reduced to a simple confession of faith and a willingness to participate in the life of the congregation. Baptism was not a prerequisite for membership, but was to be an act of faith, a statement of one's desire to follow in the way of Jesus Christ. Campbell's aversion to the communion token was that he did not believe that people should be excluded from full participation in any ritual, but especially communion, that brought them more fully into God's presence.

When First Christian moved the church building in 1897 from leased land to land, they owned, and the building was expanded to prepare for more people, they decided to appoint a Sunday school superintendent. It was at this time attendance records officially were kept. During this time the concept of membership was formalized: Who could be a member? What was required for membership? In order to hold a leadership role a person was required to be a member. Membership required: regular attendance in worship, regular attendance and participation in Sunday school, tithing of 10% of income or more, baptism, and a public confession of faith (confessing that you accept Jesus Christ as your personal savior). Membership became quintessential institutionalized faith. By 1928, First Christian boasted a prestigious membership: state senators, the mayor, and prominent businessmen, the Chief of Police and city council members. As long as trust in institution remained high, membership remained high. But with the decline of trust beginning in the 1960's came the decline of membership.²⁴ It continued to decline until 2010. In spite of the decline, cultural change, distrust of institutions and the concept of membership there are still those for whom membership is important. When First Christian updated their bylaws in 2011 thought was given to membership.

²⁴ Seymour and Schneider, "The Decline of Confidence in American Institutions."

Struggling with language it was decided to use the term covenantal membership as an interim concept. In an attempt to acclimate the congregation to new language, the word membership was removed from the pew cards – attendance forms people are asked to fill out on Sunday mornings. The box for membership was removed, and in its place a question was added: Is this your first time attending? Do you attend regularly? There was an older person – long -time member – who was very distraught that the word membership no longer was an option. Every Sunday they would cross out “Do you attend regularly?” and hand write “member” with a bold check mark next to it and a note that read, “PLEASE PUT MEMBER BACK!!” Membership is engrained in the psyche of the older generations.

I posit that the concept of membership is the single most destructive element in the old institutional structure. In order for church institution to transcend into a new model there must be a re-imagining of the concept of membership.

Leadership – Several years ago a well- meaning long-time member of FCC would rush to the back of the sanctuary at the end of worship when a new person was present. They would stand next to me in the receiving line as I greeted people following the service. When the new person approached, they would immediately go to them shake their hand and welcome them by saying, “I’m so glad you are here. I hope you will consider being involved. We have so much that needs to be done and we need for you to help.” They said this with complete sincerity and an honest belief that their words were welcoming. Further, they believed that they were bestowing an honor upon that new person. It was inconceivable to them that the new person might not hear their words as welcome or honor, but rather at best a turn off and at worst insulting.

The older member was raised in the old institutional model in which a core value was prestige of membership and the privilege of leadership. From their perspective offering someone a chance to participate in the work of the church was offering them an opportunity to engage in leadership. They were breaking with convention. Skipping the formalities of public confession, baptism, membership and jumping right to all the work to be accomplished. The old membership core was tired of carrying the load and were desperate for new, younger people to pick up the reins. New congregants were being brusquely invited into serving long before they were prepared to do so. One reason for the old memberships willingness to allow brand new people into their inner circle of power was that they imagined new people would simply pick up where they left off and do things the way they had always been done. They did not expect new leaders to have ideas, thoughts and suggestions of their own. They were unprepared for challenges to the status quo. The older membership was especially thrown by what they considered newer congregants lack of commitment. Newer congregants were not willing to make long term commitments, they would not attend a lot of meetings, and they had no interest in most of the programs that carried so much meaning for older members e.g. Wednesday afternoon women's luncheon, Sunday school, monthly elders/deacons potluck, Church picnic held at a members house.

At its inception in 1890, the community was formed with a simple invitation to gather in homes for communion and prayer. There was not a minister, there were no formalized roles for leaders. It was a simple community gathering for a simple purpose: prayer, communion and fellowship with others who felt drawn to the restoration movement's concept of "simple new testament" church. The first official role of leadership was given to Eshelman in 1891 who had been invited to the gatherings by a friend. He served as a part-time. Preaching when he was in

the area. Official roles for lay leaders began in 1897 with appointment of the first superintendent of Sunday school.²⁵ As the congregation grew in number leadership roles were expanded. Roles for Elders and deacons, chair of the elders, chair of the deacons, board of trustees, church board, committee chairs – stewardship, education, property, worship, outreach, social, women’s mission, men’s mission- Sunday school teachers, Sunday school superintendent, financial secretary, ushers, head usher, acolytes, junior deacons, associate pastor, worship leader, music director, head custodian, pastor, church secretary. Over time every person who held any type of leadership position had a seat on one of the two boards. When the board was paired down to one general church board it was made up of 50 people. Minutes from some of these meetings from the 1960s and 70s indicate that board meetings lasted more than four hours.²⁶

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has struggled with leadership from the beginning. Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone had differing views. Campbell was adamantly opposed to ministers being educated. He believed that educated clergy would become elitist. As McCallister and Tucker explain “he accused ministers of avarice because they received salaries; he loathed ministerial titles and opposed formal education for ministry on the ground that it tended to elevate the clergyman above the layperson.”²⁷ In his later years Campbell softened on his stance becoming the founder and first president of Bethany College, West Virginia in 1840.²⁸ Campbell believed strongly in lay leadership. And believed in higher education for everyone. Stone on the other hand was a proponent of educated clergy. Both men, along with Thomas Campbell and Walter Scot believed in higher education for all people.

²⁵ Lawson, *100 Years of Christian Witness*, 1.

²⁶ “First Christian Church, Olympia, WA,” (First Christian Church, Olympia, WA. October 1974).

²⁷ William Edward Tucker and Lester G. McAllister, *Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (Saint Louis: Bethany Press, 1975), 30.

²⁸ Tucker and McAllister, *Journey in Faith*, 30.

Thomas Campbell, Walter Scot and Barton W. Stone all held higher education degrees.

Alexander Campbell had 2 years at University in Glasgow, Scotland and tutoring from his father. Perhaps Alexander's initial response to the education of clergy was grounded in his belief that education should not be limited to a chosen few but be made available to all. In other words, the clergy should not be more educated than the average person.²⁹ In 1835, he published an essay on explaining his belief that the "New Testament clearly taught that all Christians are obliged to carry on all the ordinances of Worship."³⁰ He went on to outline a suitable order of worship for congregations " (1) opening hymn; (2) gospel reading; (3) prayer of Thanksgiving; (4) New Testament epistle reading; (5) hymn; (6) invitation to the table; (7) simple administration of bread and wine by an elder; (8) hymn; (9) prayer of supplication; (10) readings from Old Testament and New Testament and remarks from the people for edification; (11) "spiritual songs"; and (12) apostolic benediction by the presider."³¹ The order clearly shows his belief in the full participation and leadership of laity.

First Christian Church, within the old institutional structure is aligned fully with our restoration movement roots - a focus on laity participation and leadership. While the board was paired down to seven members in 2009, the mindset of the old members has not fully adapted thus a tension exists between new congregants and old members, and between the new system of governing and the old system of governing. In order for FCC to move forward leadership and roles must be addressed. Under the current adaptation there is a disconnect between the board and the congregation. David Peter Stroh uses the term creative tension in describing the gap

²⁹ Tucker and McAllister, *Journey in Faith*, 163–64.

³⁰ Tucker and McAllister, *Journey in Faith*, 787.

³¹ Douglas A. Foster, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement: Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Churches/Churches of Christ/Churches of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 787.

between Vision, Mission, Values (what you want) and Current Reality (what you have).³² This model for change builds on the energy between what people want vs. what they have. The common goal or aspiration creates the creative tension that in turn creates the energy to make that change happen. In FCC's case this is true to some degree. The problem arises from the inability to break from the institution. The old institution holds the rituals and faith hostage to new ideas. In order for change to fully manifest the old institution must be dismantled which will require changing the mindset of the people. This most likely will take time. It may take a generation. As Alan Roxburgh wrote in regard to the Israelites 40 years in the wilderness, "The point wasn't that it took forty years to get Israel out of Egypt, rather, the wilderness time was necessary because it took forty years to get "Egypt" out of the Israelites."³³ FCC made important strides toward change over the years. Rewriting the bylaws to include covenantal language concerning membership; using a consensus model for board meetings; adding an open and affirming statement. They have done incredible work in reaching outside of their walls. Focusing on living faith rather than simply going to church. Everything they have done over the past 11 years have helped them to transform. But, like the Israelites who needed the wilderness experience in order to understand how to live freely rather than as slaves, FCC has been in the wilderness. They are ready to enter a new land.

Chapter 3

Dismantling the Structure

³² David Peter Stroh, *Systems Thinking for Social Change: A Practical Guide to Solving Complex Problems, Avoiding Unintended Consequences, and Achieving Lasting Results* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015), 73.

³³ H. Benjamin Bohren, Sandhya R Jha, and Paula Bishop Pociecha, *And Still We Rise: A Six-Part Study on Personal & Congregational Transformation* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2007), 2.

If March and Olsen are correct in their identifiers of sociological institutions, “they internalize, as they are formed, elements of the cultural and normative contexts,”³⁴ it is critical, when forming new institution, to identify the values, mission and vision of First Christian Church within the cultural context in which it was organized before any other work. In analyzing the old institution through the sociological lens one can see the markers of the cultural and normative context from the time of formation e.g. membership, leadership, and the building. Analysis of the current set of Bylaws gives insight to where the old and new institution are in tension with one another and with cultural norms.

Bylaws analysis

Dismantling an institutional structure without appreciation and understanding of the history and historical context would be irresponsible. There are stories and traditions that are integral to the formation of First Christian as an institution that shape who it is today. A deep analysis of the bylaws – past and present – along with historical analysis of what was happening globally, nationally, locally within the culture offers an in depth understanding of the church from formation. Critical to the dismantling process is understanding the traditions, rituals, and values within their historical and sociological context. The goal is to dismantle not destroy.

Deep analysis of bylaws begins by researching the history of the congregation, and the history of the community and placing that history within the larger context of the U.S., world and denominational history creating a timeline of cultural, historical and sociological events. The timeline becomes the tool by which deep analysis occurs allowing leadership and congregants to understand the full context in which the church was organized. Ritual and traditions are

³⁴ Lecours, *New Institutionalism*, 7.

influenced by cultural values. It is imperative that within the dismantling process the leadership team grapple with the importance and relevance of tradition and ritual.

During a new testament class in seminary professor Ron Allen, affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), emphasized the Wesleyan quadrilateral as a primary method used in interpreting scriptures and theological thinking within the Disciples denomination. A method developed by John Wesley in the 18th century. Wesley expanded the Anglican concept of the three-legged stool which holds that scripture, reason and tradition are equally important in interpretation and theology. Wesley added a fourth leg – experience. Not necessarily personal experience, but the collective Christian experience.³⁵ Debate took place within the classroom between those who believed that all four legs were equal and those who believed it was impossible for them to be equal. Some arguing that experience had to have a larger influence over tradition and history while others insisted that tradition was more important. Everyone agreed that scripture had to be primary. I was struck at the time how easily we all agreed that scripture was essential and went on with debating whether experience or tradition were more important. No one spent any time discussing our differing interpretations of scripture. How could we possibly come to any understanding if we did not first understand that while we all held scripture central, we did not all agree on interpretation? Instead at the heart of the dialogue was a discussion about relevance. Can tradition be thrown out if it appears to no longer be relevant? What happens when experience teaches us that traditions are no longer relevant? Should we hold traditions sacred for the sake of history? How should we separate ritual from tradition? When tradition and collective experience have embedded destructive ideals within the institutional structure is it possible to dismantle those ideals without destroying the beauty of ritual and value

³⁵ Elaine A. Robinson, “Our Formative Foursome: The Wesleyan Quadrilateral and Postmodern Discipleship,” *Covenant Discipleship Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 1–10.

of tradition? Is there room to consider personal experience as well as collective? Does the church become a weed in the wind if it changes traditions with cultural shifts in society? Do we lose our identity if we lose some tradition and add new? Essentially, we must ask what does it mean to be Disciples? Can we point to a scriptural reference? A tradition, a ritual, an experience that embodies our identity?

In 2013 First Christian held a special congregational meeting to officially adopt an open and affirming statement and add it to the bylaws (the latest revision to the bylaws). A team was assembled to work on preparing the congregation and writing a statement. While one hundred percent of the congregation was supportive of being open and affirming, there were about twenty percent who were uncomfortable putting it in writing. When pressed as to why they were uncomfortable they expressed concern with being able to live up to the statement. They were afraid that putting it in writing made them responsible for everyone's behavior. What if a person walked in off the street and one of our members did not welcome and accept them in the way our statement claimed? Wouldn't it be more damaging for someone to walk in believing it was a safe space only to be made to feel unwelcomed by an insensitive person? Those who were concerned to put it in writing were drawing heavily on past collective experience. There had been an incident ten years prior where several influential families left the church over changes put in writing without full consent of the congregation.

I was struck by the fact the congregation was willing to implement change as long as that change did not touch the institutional structure. They were willing to act like an open and affirming congregation but putting it in the bylaws instilled a different level of obligation that they were uncomfortable with. It affirmed two things for me: the institutional church has been structured to default back to its original core values, and that a strong core value of the 1958

institutional model was grounded in the importance of following rules and tradition. This was an interesting moment to capture. Traditional church people were rule followers while the newer non-traditional people were leery of too many rules. This realization led to several well-organized congregational conversations where people were invited to listen to one another's faith stories. Traditionalists shared stories of the love, support and strength the church had given them over the course of their lifetimes while Non-traditionalists shared stories of how the institutional church had let them down or caused harm to them or someone they loved. They were introduced to our denomination's vision scripture, Micah 6: "he has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"³⁶ as a way of grounding conversation scripturally. Through sharing and listening they were able to shift the collective experience to a place that came in balance with tradition, reason and scripture. The open and affirming statement was unanimously adopted with the understanding that we were not obligating ourselves to perfection, but rather seeking to live into a vision we believe is grounded in God's call and based on our understanding of scripture, reason, tradition and experience.

Ritual, and Tradition

In searching for a way to identify ritual and tradition within the institutional church a working definition of both must be defined. The Oxford dictionary offers the following definitions of ritual and tradition respectively as they pertain to the Christian faith. Ritual is, "A religious or solemn ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to a

³⁶ Micah 6:8 (NRSV).

prescribed order.”³⁷ and tradition is, “A doctrine believed to have divine authority though not in the scriptures. 2. (in Christianity) doctrine not explicit in the Bible but held to derive from the oral teaching of Christ and the Apostles.”³⁸ While these are good basic definitions, I believe they don’t quite capture how ritual and tradition have become institutionalized and actualized within congregational life. Martha Sims and Martine Stephens describe ritual in the following way in their book *Living Folklore: Introduction to the Study of People and their Traditions*, “...rituals are outward expressions or enactments of inwardly experienced values, beliefs and attitudes...”³⁹ They suggest the following for tradition within a community or group, “the flip side of creating or confirming identity through tradition is that traditions themselves must be identified as meaningful by groups.”⁴⁰ Using both Sims and Stephens definitions in combination with the dictionary definitions we can now evaluate the rituals and traditions that are specifically named, as well as those that are un-named within the bylaws.

If Sims and Stephens definitions hold true, then every ritual should be a reflection of the congregations core values and beliefs. Traditions should also be a reflection of core values passed down through time that still hold relevance and importance today. It also will be true that some traditions can be let go of while new traditions added. For example, communion is a ritual that First Christian holds to be the center of our faith. Our tradition, in keeping with denominational history and beliefs is to practice communion every Sunday. This is a ritual and tradition that most likely would never change. However, associated with the ritual, and defined

³⁷ “Ritual Definition,” English Oxford Living Dictionaries, accessed February 23, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ritual>.

³⁸ “Tradition Definition,” English Oxford Living Dictionaries, accessed February 23, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/tradition>.

³⁹ Martha C. Sims and Martine Stephens, *Living Folklore: An Introduction to the Study of People and Their Traditions*, 2nd ed. (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2011), 100.

⁴⁰ Sims and Stephens, 69.

within the bylaws is a tradition that states there should be two elders and six deacons serve communion each Sunday. This tradition has been passed down through the years and is a reflection of a time when the congregation was much larger, and there was a greater number of people available, willing and able to serve. It is a reflection of old institutional values that no longer make sense in the current context.

This issue has been an ongoing discussion for many years. The congregation recognizes the impracticality of the numbers but struggles with changing their tradition. Some state a fear of losing connection with our heritage. For others the tradition is set in stone and should not be changed because it is the way they have always seen it done, therefore it must be the right way. Newer people tend to believe that all the fuss is unnecessary, and we could uncomplicate the whole thing by removing all requirements and pull volunteers from those present on Sunday morning. Others fear that allowing newer people to participate without the formal traditions would undermine the authority of tradition.

Brian McClaren identifies what he calls 3 N Christianity – nostalgic, nativist, negative - unflattering characteristics Christianity takes on within the shift from a “modern/colonial/industrial world to the postmodern/post-colonial/post-industrial world.”⁴¹ He asserts that, evangelicals, mainline protestants and Catholics alike, use nostalgic language in the face of cultural change. Longing for a time when not only the church, but the country reflected more Christian and more American values when issues such as, homosexuality, abortion, immigration, and divorce were not prominent. Longing for those perceived better days, nostalgic thinking takes hold and the congregation uses change back language combined with an effort to turn back the clock. The nativist characteristic comes from fear, anger and loss because those

⁴¹ David P. Gushee, ed., *A New Evangelical Manifesto: A Kingdom Vision for the Common Good* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2012), 3.

who held the power during the good old days are no longer in power. There is a desire to return power to the old majority. Negativity is the product of the fear, loss and anger. It is seen most clearly in the language of othering. As a congregation allows itself to become emmeshed in nostalgic and nativist thinking people who are not part of the old institution traditions are treated as less than or even enemies of the congregation rather than welcomed and beloved children of God. Being mindful of these characteristics is helpful when navigating deep analysis. If a congregation becomes mired in the 3 N's it will be difficult to identify, modify or separate from tradition.

In the case of two elders and six deacons it is possible to see the presence of the 3 N's. A longing for things to return to the way they used to be, or in this case a refusal to change reflects the nostalgic characteristic. The nativist and negativity characteristics peek out in the ongoing discussions about what change might look like. Newer congregants would prefer to have a less regulated schedule. They believe that the role of deacon could be relegated to volunteers on Sunday morning rather than having a set schedule of who is to serve each week. The traditionalist long time members feel threatened by this idea. It does not look like anything they have ever done before, and they find it difficult to trust ideas brought forward from people who do not have the long history with the congregation.

Using deep analysis with the introduction of 3 N's we can map the history of communion within the congregation as well as within the denomination. It offers a perspective on how cultural shifts have changed how the congregation and denomination have participated in this ritual. For example, prior to 1890 when the church was officially incorporated, First Christian worshiped in a variety of different buildings. They were quite small. They had no official organization. No elders, no deacons and not always a pastor. They partook by intinction passing the cup and the

loaf to each other. In 1890, they had a more formalized practice passing trays of wine and plates of bread out into the congregation by deacons. At that time all deacons and elders would have been men. In 1825 Alexander Campbell one of the founders of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) wrote a four-part series, published in his magazine *The Christian Baptist*, entitled *The Breaking of Bread*. He said, “It was the design of the Saviour that his disciples should not be deprived of this joyful festival when they meet in one place to worship God. . . . He did not assemble them to weep, and wail, and starve with him. No, he commands them to rejoice always, and bids them eat and drink abundantly.”⁴² His writing was more concerned with the frequency and the tone of communion rather than how it be served. An argument could be made that spending time arguing over how many deacons and how many elders should serve goes against the historical identity of the denomination.

Recognizing and naming the 3 N’s can help people understand the issue in a new light. Taking the process one step further it is possible to use deep analysis (historical, cultural, denominational and congregational) with the identification of 3 N’s within the 5D cycle approach of appreciative inquiry. This process will be explored in more depth in chapter 4.

Article II Rituals and Traditions of the First Christian Church bylaws lists three things: Baptism, Communion and Membership covenant. This section will be the first section to be examined within the deep analysis process. Understanding the named rituals and traditions of the institution is essential in order to dismantle. It is essential to the success of this project that our rituals are a true reflection of our internal values, and that the traditions we hold support those values. The analysis should lead us into an in-depth discussion of scriptural interpretation,

⁴²Alexander Campbell, “A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things.” *The Christian Baptist*, III (October 3, 1825): 185-192.

especially as it pertains to our rituals. These will be the building blocks from which new institution is created.

Silent Othering: Membership has privilege

The third characteristic of the 3 N's - negativity –manifests when fear, anger and loss are prevalent within a system. According to Brian McClaren it most often is revealed through language of othering. In analyzing the language and structure of the bylaws I would argue that fear is the basis for the concept of church membership as it is reflected in the old institutional values.

During the 1950s the congregation, along with other mainline congregations in the area and across the country, enjoyed tremendous growth. The country was thriving in the post-war time following world war II. Jason Lantzer describes the Church environment during this time in the following way:

For much of the 1950s there seemed to be much to be positive about. Churches were growing, the nation was prospering, and civil religion was firmly a part of America's Cold War culture. Indeed, the '50s were a flourishing period for theologians. The decade saw the rise in prominence of men such as Paul Tillich (who sought to make sure that the Christian message was applicable to each new generation), H. Richard Niebuhr (who critiqued both conservative and liberal Protestantism), and Reinhold Niebuhr (whose work on Christian ethics rivaled that of his brother Richard).⁴³

It was a glorious time, particularly if you were a part of the middle or upper class, white, male and protestant. During this time belonging to the right groups mattered. Membership mattered.

First Christian historical archives hold a collection of hand-written first-person narratives authored by members of the congregation for the one hundredth anniversary of the congregation. These narratives affirm the joy and excitement people felt about the congregation during the

⁴³ Jason Lantzer, *Mainline Christianity: The Past and Future of America's Majority Faith* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2012), 49.

1950s. It also confirms the importance of belonging to what was considered a prestigious congregation. To be a member at such a magnificent newer church building in the gothic revival style that was a rarity in the Pacific Northwest, located in the heart of downtown Olympia was an honor. State Politicians, City leaders, and other prominent members of the community boasted membership at First Christian Olympia. Membership in the congregation gave a person connections to people of importance. It could open doors for men to better jobs, political access, membership in other clubs. Not to suggest that people were only interested in the congregation for its social connections. The archival narratives clearly tell the story of a faithful people seeking to worship and serve God too. But there is no question that with membership came certain privileges: opportunity to network with people in positions of power, access to clubs outside of church community, status in the community.

The polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) on becoming a member of a congregation has always been fairly straightforward and simple. In the 1950s at First Christian a person (but preferably as a family) need only to come forward during the invitation to membership during worship, affirm belief in the confession of faith, express a desire to transfer membership from another congregation, or simply join. The assumption was that if they were not already baptized they would make arrangements with the minister to be baptized or if they had been baptized in a different denomination that did not practice immersion they would have to be re-baptized. This process was intended to be an act of great welcome and hospitality. Unlike other mainline protestant denominations that required membership classes before joining, the Disciples offered an open invitation each week.

The trouble with an open invitation is that there is not a great deal of control of who comes forward each week. For example if a person of lower socio-economic status than people

are comfortable seeing comes forward there is nothing to prevent them from becoming a member. In fact there is no safe-guard against people of differing race, sexuality, economics, politics, or religious beliefs from coming forward and joining. In Jesus vision for the world this is wonderful. Throw open the doors and welcome all people. But in the world of the 1950's, especially the later part of the decade when issues of civil rights were looming and the nation was on the brink of war in Vietnam fear was festering just beneath the surface. The thought of letting just anyone be a part was not the most welcome idea. In 1958 as the Disciples were coming together as an official denomination and congregations like First Christian in Olympia were writing new bylaws I believe membership became solidified within the old institutional structure in a way that has become nearly possible to undo.

Simply joining and claiming membership would not be enough for full inclusion. Rules were put in place to assure that only those judged worthy would be allowed in positions of service and leadership. The first point of exclusion – a person had to be a white male. They had to have some demonstrated ability in the position that they were being asked to serve i.e. if they were a school teacher they could teach Sunday school, if they were a manager, politician, or civic leader they could be considered for board chair or vice chair or to chair a committee. It was a structure born of its time and made sense in that context. There was no malice. I do contend there was fear. Fear of the other. Fear of the wrong kind of person having power, fear of losing status.

Several years ago a person who had enjoyed a great deal of status within the congregation years earlier walked into the building on Sunday morning for worship. They passed the fellowship hall where we were hosting a warming center for houseless people who needed to get off the streets and out of the cold and rain. The long- time member pulled me aside to tell me that

they understood what we were trying to do by helping the homeless, but they were very concerned and embarrassed. They were worried what their friends outside of the church would think if they happened to walk by and see all the homeless people hanging out at the church. This person said all this without any malice. It was a sincere concern that status of the church would be diminished if it was seen as a place where the other felt at home, and if the church status was diminished then their personal reputation would be marred. They were enslaved to a set of old institutional values leading them to believe they were of greater value than others.

The language of othering is hidden within the old values and needs to be identified and challenged. Membership may be the greatest challenge to face when dismantling and creating new institution, but it is a concept that must be faced if the church is to truly transcend.

Chapter 4

The Project: designing new institution

In his book *A Failure Of Nerve* Edwin H. Friedman uses the term the presence of past to describe the past as something that cannot simply be dismissed by the turn of a calendar page. Rather generations are connected and formed through history. The past enfolds itself into the psyche of each new generation compressing like a long lens of a telescope. He writes, “the nature of connections in the present can have more to do with what has been transmitted successively for many generations than with the logic of their contemporary relationship.”⁴⁴

History matters. First Christian Church is shaped by the history of those who founded the congregation and those over the years who have been the stewards of legacy. It also owes its formation to the history of the Restoration movement and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Each person within the congregation brings their own personal history of what it means to be church. For the majority of the older members personal history with church is positive. Church has always been the center of their lives and always will be. For the majority of newer congregants church is something they hold on to lightly. Many have a negative historical understanding or connection with church. Phase one is designed to share stories from the Restoration movement and the design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) within the worship experience. In place of a children’s story (we have not had children in worship for several years) has been a segment called Stories for All Ages – retelling the narrative stories of the bible. Disciples 101 will replace Stories for all Ages. Each segment is 5 to 8 minutes long.

⁴⁴Edwin H. Friedman, Margaret M. Treadwell, and Edward W. Beal, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*, 10th anniversary revised ed. (New York: Church Publishing, 2017), 264.

An easel, flip chart and large black marker, will be used as tools to help capture important phrases, dates and to draw primitive illustrations. The pages created during worship will be saved to be used during Phase 3. In the book *Systems Thinking for Social Change*, David Peter Stroh has created a process for identified elements within systems that need to be addressed in order for change to occur. The foundation of this process is built on “telling systems stories.”⁴⁵ Phase 1 and Phase 2 of this project are designed to tell systems stories in order to prepare the board and congregation to identify the areas within the congregation’s institution/system that are holding them in place and preventing them from living into the future. Phases 3 will build on these systems stories and help to design/create/imagine a new institution.

Disciples 101 and 2.0 are designed to be 8 weeks long. 101 focuses primarily on the story of us as we are connected to the denomination. We will explore the key characters of the Stone Campbell movement and find our place within that movement as we examine how First Christian’s story unfolds within the denominational story. 2.0 is an exploration of denominational polity, the stories of how that polity came into being, our ritual and traditions.

Leadership Study

Phase 3 is a 6-week leadership study designed for the core leadership of the congregation. Core leadership are those serving on the board as well as those who have been identified as holding informal leadership.⁴⁶ Utilizing the appreciative inquiry 5 D cycle in conjunction with the bylaws deep analysis and exploration of the 3 N’s of Christianity this study’s aim is to prepare the leadership to lead identify the core values, rituals and traditions that are essential to the congregation so that the work of dismantling and creating can take place.

⁴⁵ Stroh, *Systems Thinking for Social Change*, 30.

⁴⁶Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2017).

The 5 D cycle begins with define - defining the question to be asked. In this case there will be the over- arching question how do we create a new institution? But each week will address one specific question that is an important piece of the over arching question. For example, week one's question is what rituals and traditions matter? Once the question is defined the cycle moves to Discovery. In this stage the leadership will be asked to name the best of what is. For example, they would name the things that are best about the ritual of communion. The third cycle is the dreaming. This is where they are asked to what might be. Dreaming leads naturally into design the forth D design. How can the dream become a reality? The fifth is to deliver. Implementing the design.⁴⁷

Interwoven into each of these cycles is an invitation to consider where or if the 3 N's are present. Brian McClaren contends that the 3 N's are characteristics most likely to be found in more Christians who are bound to a traditional church model whether that model be evangelical, catholic or mainline protestant. In his experience he has found that people who are coming to Christianity from an emergent or non- church background find these 3 N's to be a turn off. McClaren has identified hope, diversity and creative collaboration as the characteristics that non-traditional people find most attractive in a church experience.⁴⁸ My experience has led me to concur with him. However, I would go a step further. I believe most people, whether traditionalists or non-traditionalist would prefer the characteristics of hope, diversity and creative collaboration if given an opportunity to experience these within a safe and affirming setting. It is the intent of this leadership study to help set a tone of hope, respect for diversity and for it to be a creative collaboration that becomes a model for the congregation.

⁴⁷ Sue Annis Hammond, *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*, 3rd ed. (Bend, OR: Thin Book Publishing, 2013), 26–33.

⁴⁸ Gushee, *A New Evangelical Manifesto*, 6–7.

Reading two books together is a significant piece of the study. Recognizing that it is a significant commitment the first book – Rachel Held Evans *Searching for Sunday* is to be read several months before the leadership study. I chose this book for several reasons. Evans focus is on the seven sacraments of church: Baptism, Confession, Holy Orders, Communion, Confirmation, Anointing the Sick, and Marriage. She does a beautiful job of weaving story, ritual and tradition together. Her work is very lay friendly, and I believe will help create fertile ground for questions and discussion to grow. The second book is *Practices for the Refounding of God's People* by Alan J. Roxburgh and Martin Robinson. We will read this during the leadership study. I have chosen this book because Roxburgh and Robinson offer great insights into how Christianity and the church have emerged into what they call the modern west. This book will be helpful in giving historical background as we analyze First Christian through historical and sociological lenses. Roxburgh and Robinson argue that church must think beyond its walls in this ever-changing world. First Christian has been moving in that direction for the past ten years, and I think this book can help to motivate them to go further. The key to dismantling the old institution in order to create a new is the willingness to see the world beyond the walls as equaling important as the world within.

Leadership Study – Outline (see Appendix C)

Week One – Define - What Rituals and Traditions Matter?

The primary work of this session is to create the timeline using resources from our archives and library. I will introduce the working definitions of ritual and tradition and invite the leadership to

consider what rituals and traditions they see emerge from the timeline. They will be invited to think about how First Christian values are represented within ritual and tradition

Week two – Discovery – when are we at our best – fully living into our values?

This week we will recap ritual and tradition. Each participant will be invited to share any insights or thoughts that emerged during the week. The focus of this session is to discover. To ask what is. When are we our best? What rituals and traditions lead us to practice our best selves and what traditions might be leading away from our best? I will introduce the definition of habit and mini habits based on Guise's book *Mini Habits*.⁴⁹ They will be invited to consider the difference between habit and ritual.

Week three – Dream – What might be?

Continuing to analyze the bylaws with the timeline. Further identification of ritual, habit and tradition. Asking What more could we do? What might be? For example if membership is a hinderance to the church fully transcending how might we move on without that? What might be?

Week four – Design -What is essential to our core values?

The focus this week will be to design a plan for the congregation to be a part of the conversation. How can we best bring them into the vision? Understanding that the leadership core does not hold the full picture. There are stories and memories held within the larger body that will be important to add to the timeline. Can we create a ritual to include the congregation that will help us move a step closer to full transformation?

⁴⁹ Stephen Guise, *Mini Habits: Smaller Habits, Bigger Results* (Scotts Valley, CA: Create Space Independent Publishing, 2013).

Week five -define, discover, dream, design, deliver

This week I will introduce McClaren's 3N's. The leadership will be invited to look at each piece we have already analyzed and each ritual and tradition through the lens of the 3 N's. Where do they peek through?

Week six – Conclusion

This week they will spend in groups working on creating ritual, planning the congregational piece and sharing ideas for implementing.

Conclusion

Findley B. Edge's first line of the preface to his book *A Quest For Vitality In Religion: A Theological Approach to Religious Education*, written in 1963, reads, "At the present time churches are experiencing a period of almost unparalleled popularity and prosperity."⁵⁰ My career in ministry began in 2006. Over the past 13 years I have read hundreds of books on Church vitality, transformation, renewal, emergent, incarnational or any of the other names for trying to "fix" what is broken. Almost all of which are premised on the realization that the Church is in decline. All of those books were written within the last 20 years. Authors such as, Edward H. Hammet who has written a book, *Recovering Hope for Your Church*⁵¹ that proposes the church need to move away from maintaining the norm, and simply doing mission into incarnational engagement. Hammett defines an incarnational church as one that embodies fully the ministry and teachings of their faith. They don't simply do missional acts but live

⁵⁰ Edge, *A Quest for Vitality in Religion*, 1.

⁵¹ Hammett, *Recovering Hope for Your Church*.

missionally. He uses illness as a metaphor within his process for changing the Church. The Church is sick and there is a prescribed remedy to bring it back to health. Phil Snider and Emily Bowen's work, *Toward a Hopeful Future*, focuses on emergent church within the worship experience. Positing that emergent church is a way to bring hope and renewal into the failing mainline churches.⁵² In *Organizing Church*, Tim Conder and Dan Rhodes focus on re-defining church, thereby re-organizing. They call it a practice-based ecclesiology.⁵³ There is great value in all of these models, and useful elements to use within the leadership study. However, their basic premise that the church is sick, or broken, or tired and needs to be healed, repaired or woke is counter to my thesis which is that that church cannot be healed, repaired, or woke in the current institutional structure. The institutional ideals, values and system must be dismantled in order for the congregation to design a new system that has enough flexibility built in to allow it to adapt easily and quickly to cultural and societal shifts.

Edge, writing in 1963, went beyond simply stating the obvious- that the Church was prospering. He recognized something that very few others could see at that time. "Many thoughtful religious leaders and mature Christian laypersons evidence a growing ferment of uneasiness and concern. In spite of plush church buildings, growing membership, and many vigorous activities that are carried on within the churches, something is seriously wrong with modern Christianity." He goes on to state his thesis, "that many evidences indicate that institutionalism is threatening the vitality of our churches."⁵⁴ Institutionalization of religion in the 1950's shifted the values of the Church from focus on community and relationship; faith

⁵²Phil Snider and Emily Bowen, *Toward a Hopeful Future: Why the Emergent Church Is Good News for Mainline Congregations* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2010), 21.

⁵³ Tim Conder and Daniel Rhodes, *Organizing Church: Grassroots Practices for Embodying Change in Your Congregation, Your Community, and Our World*, (St. Louis, MO; Chalice Press, 2017), 13.

⁵⁴Findley B. Edge, *A Quest for Vitality in Religion*, xiii.

formation, prayer, worship; living faithfully within the world; and our sharing faith with the world to preserving the institution. I have heard many times in my ministry in several different settings people talk about the need for new people, especially younger people, so that the church can survive financially. They can break down the average unit of giving that a new person can be counted on. From there they extrapolate the number of new people needed in order to meet the budget. Years ago, a congregant was lamenting the lack of children in the church and wondering what we could do to attract young families. I suggested that we reach out to the 30 families living in the shelter in our basement. These families are in crisis and might welcome a faith community where they could feel loved, safe, pray, worship and explore their faith. The congregant replied, oh no, they don't have any money, that won't work. Preserving the institution has become enmeshed with faith. Somewhere within the excitement of prosperity and growth of the 1950's the Church shifted its core value from loving our neighbor, God and ourselves to Loving ourselves only. Somehow, we decided that our job as Christians was to save the Church – which meant to become as big as possible. To care more about our buildings, and monetary matters than the ministry to which we are called – care for creation, for neighbors, for self and to love God with our whole being.

In all four Gospels Jesus feeds the masses with fewer resources than the Disciples thought possible. In Matthew 10 Jesus sends the Disciples out without food, or money, without any overnight provisions. He tells them to carry nothing. To go out into the world and proclaim the realm of God here and now. During the height of our prosperity in during the 1950's and the 1950's and the 1960's we became comfortable with wealth. We forgot that God only requires our faith and our trust. We forgot that our purpose was not to be the biggest gathering, but to proclaim the good news in the world. We forgot that a small group – as small as 12 even – is

mighty if they live in covenant with God. The time has come for First Christian Church in Olympia, Washington to create a new structure that frees them from the slavery of old institution. It's time to fully embrace the small but mighty congregation God calls us to be.

“Accompany us then on this Vigil
And you will know what it is to dream!
You will then know how marvelous it is
To live threatened with resurrection!
To dream awake,
To keep watch asleep
To live while dying
And to already know oneself resurrected!”⁵⁵

Julia Esquivel

⁵⁵Julia Esquivel, *Threatened Us With Resurrection: Prayers and Poems from an Exiled Guatemalan* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1994).

Appendix A

Bylaws analysis

Bylaws

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Olympia, Washington

INCORPORATION

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Olympia, Washington, is a nonprofit religious body, governed by the congregation, and incorporated under the laws of the State of Washington. The decree of incorporation was filed for record in the office of the Secretary of State April 4, 1892, as recorded in Book 5, page 334, Domestic Corporations. The amended Articles of Incorporation were filed for record in the office of the Secretary of State January 23, 1975, under file number 244126, microfilm roll #1311, pages 266-269. The amended Articles of Incorporation, dated June 8, 1992, were filed for record in the office of the Secretary of State, alphabetically under churches.

Straightforward simple documentation of the process of incorporation belying a deep and rich history. There is an opportunity within this statement opportunity to educate on congregational history.

AFFILIATION

This congregation is affiliated with the denomination known as the “Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).” The congregation participates in the affairs of the denomination by supporting and working through the national and regional agencies of this body to fulfill those aspects of the mission of Christ and His Church which are beyond the range of the local congregation.

The bylaws state clearly that First Christian Church is affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) but the language is stilted, and the content is vague. “The congregation participates in the affairs of the denomination by supporting and working through the national and regional agencies of this body to fulfill those aspects of the mission of Christ and His Church which are beyond the range of the local congregation.”⁵⁶ This statement does not reflect an understanding of or incorporation of the denominational priorities, mission, or vision. During

⁵⁶ bylaws team, “Bylaws - First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Olympia, Washington - Amended 2012” (First Christian Church, 2012).

the New Beginnings process when it was decided to streamline the board a decision was made about congregational giving as it pertained to the General Church. The budget had a line item for Disciples Mission Fund (DMF) – a “common funding system” that is managed by the General Church.⁵⁷ The congregation designated a certain percentage to go to DMF annually. A decision was made to cut the line item from the budget thus significantly reducing the congregation’s General and Regional ministry support. They did this to hold on to their reserve funds for fear of not having enough operations funds. In place of the line item they voted to create a list of 12 special monthly offerings. Each month the special offering would go to the designated organization. 4 of those special offerings are the General church offerings: Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and Reconciliation. The financial connection historically had been a way of keeping the congregation connected to the broader mission of our Regional and General church. Over the years there has been less, and less energy given to understanding how the congregation fits into a larger picture. Rethinking the Affiliation statement in the bylaws would be a good opportunity to consider who we are in a broader context, what it means to be Disciples and to expand our understanding of affiliation.

TRUST AGREEMENT AND DEED OF TRUST

In order to protect First Christian Church’s property from persons and groups who might seek to separate from the historical denominational affiliation, a Trust Agreement and a Deed of Trust have been signed describing the conveyance of ownership of the property to the Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). (See Appendix A)

During the 1980’s and 1990’s many Disciples congregation fell victim to hostile church takeovers. A group calling themselves Disciples Renewal (now they identify as Disciples

⁵⁷ “Disciples Mission Fund,” disciplesmissionfund.org, accessed November 14, 2018, <https://disciplesmissionfund.org/what-is-dmf/>.

Heritage Foundation) formed in the 1980's. They believed the Disciples were moving away from the original purpose of restoring the Church to its New Testament beginnings. The group believe in biblical inerrancy, they adamantly object to the ordination of homosexuals, and they accept baptism by immersion as the only true baptism. In 1991 The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) held its General Assembly in Kansas City, Mo. Michael Kinnamon was presented by the General Church board as the nomination to be the next General Minister and President. The Disciple Renewal group opposed his nomination because Kinnamon interpreted "Scriptures as providing no basis for refusing to ordain homosexuals."⁵⁸ The Disciples Renewal group organized small rural churches and brought busloads to the assembly to oppose Kinnamon's nomination. When the vote was called, they cast no votes and Kinnamon's nomination was defeated by 87 votes. The group then left the assembly floor, got on their busses and returned to their congregations and proceeded to secede from the denomination in spite of the fact that they were able to prevent Kinnamon from becoming the General minister and president. The irony is that the majority of people from Disciples Renewal who flooded the assembly floor for the vote held no voting credentials, but the Church officials were afraid to challenge their right to vote for fear that their congregations would leave the denomination.

In 1995 the group became angry with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) once again after it approved a plan to create COCU (Church of Christ Uniting). Disciples Renewal was disturbed by the concept of unity fearing that the Disciples were moving away from "its

⁵⁸ "Disciples of Christ Name Interim Leader: Sexuality: The Action Is Forced by Narrow Defeat of Nominee Who Argued That the Bible Does Not Forbid the Ordination of Gays The 1.1-Million-Member Church Will Select a New Candidate in 1993," *Los Angeles Times*, November 2, 1991, http://articles.latimes.com/1991-11-02/entertainment/ca-742_1_christian-church.

historic and biblical roots.”⁵⁹ At issue was the partnership with the United Church of Christ (UCC) and the mutual recognition of each denominations clergy. Disciples Renewal were upset that the UCC allowed the ordination of homosexuals and that meant that Disciples congregations could be inundated with UCC homosexual pastors.

The Kansas City Assembly and the creation of COCU were the impetus for the Disciple Renewal group to begin hostile takeovers of Disciples congregations. Many Disciples congregations had fallen prey, losing their buildings and their Disciples identity. The General church and Regional church began urging congregations to add a trust agreement and deed of trust to their bylaws. In the event of a hostile takeover the church building would not be allowed to be taken over by the new congregation, but would become, in FCC’s case, the property of the Regional church. This addendum put an end to most of the takeovers. Once the building was not in play they stopped attempting to take over and refocused on building their own independent organization changing their name from Disciples Renewal to Disciples Heritage Fellowship.

Newer people to the congregation and to the denomination have no historical understanding of how or why the trust agreement was added to the by-laws. Nowhere within the congregational archives is there a written account of why it was added. One must have personal recollection of or historical knowledge of the Disciples history from 1991 to present. Opportunity exists to provide historical context and to invite a discussion about the importance of denominational identity.

ARTICLE I WHO WE ARE

Section A Welcoming Community

⁵⁹ “Renewal Group Wary of Unity,” *Christianity Today*, December 11, 1995, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1995/december11/5te71a.html>.

We are a welcoming community who gathers in the heart of downtown Olympia. We confess that the institutional Church has, at times, harmed people by denying them God's unconditional love, but as a people of faith, we profess the worth and dignity of every person and recognize each one as created in the image of God. We differ in race, age, cultural background, ability, sexual orientation, physical condition, gender identity, family structure, and life circumstances. Together, we are on a spiritual journey as followers of the teachings of Jesus and his living example to do justice, love goodness, and walk humbly and thoughtfully with God. As we strive to reflect God's inclusive unconditional love, we invite all persons to journey with us as we engage in social outreach and wrestle with questions of faith.

Section B Open and Affirming

We of First Christian Church in Olympia, Washington welcome all people into the full life and ministry of this congregation. We recognize, celebrate and give thanks for the many diverse gifts of God among us.

In covenant, we declare ourselves to be open and affirming of all God's children, and thus we celebrate God's love for people of all race, age, gender, marital standing, physical or mental ability, economic status, nationality, and sexual orientation or identity into the full life and ministry of this community of faith.

Our Mission Statement calls us to embrace an ever-expanding community and a lifestyle of generosity and service. In covenant, we pledge to do our part in proclaiming that all people may know that any unjust discrimination is incompatible with Christ's Gospel of unconditional love.

Section A was added in 2011 when the bylaws were last updated. Section B which is the open and affirming statement was added one year later. The date on the bylaws indicates that the bylaws were updated in 2012. In fact, the only change – significant as it is – was the addition of Section B. Both section A and section B represent significant change internally and will be highlighted in the 6-week study that is prepared for the congregation. A question to wrestle with would be “how can we record the context of decisions?” Both section A and B represented a long process of study, discussion and congregational voting. Once the people who were involved in that process pass the history is lost. When is it important to preserve historical context?

ARTICLE II RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Section A Confession of Faith

We recognize that a public Confession of Faith has been an important and prominent part of expressing a person's desire to join in fellowship and community of the congregation. While we continue to honor our denominational confession, we understand that for many a public confession is a deterrent to participating fully within the community of faith, therefore a public confession of faith is not a requirement. We recognize the individual struggle to understand Jesus the man and Jesus as the risen Christ. We respect and support each other as we covenant together to seek to follow and to listen for how God is calling us together in worship, mission and community. If a person desires to make a public confession of faith by coming forward during worship, they will be welcomed and affirmed.

Section A was completely re-written and adopted by the congregation in 2011. It represents a monumental shift from the old Institution model. Prior to 2011 Section A was a statement that named a public confession of Faith as a requirement for membership. Included in the statement was the exact wording to be used in the public confession, the minister was to ask, do you accept that Jesus Christ is your Lord and personal savior?

Section B Baptism

Keeping with the tradition of The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), First Christian Church of Olympia practices baptism through immersion. We recognize all forms of baptism.

This section is also part of the significant changes that occurred in 2011. It demonstrates, along with the confession of faith, that the congregation is capable of breaking with tradition. Historically baptism has been a topic of great theological divide. One of the Disciples Renewal rejection of ecumenical unity and The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) joining COCU was that would bring us into fellowship with those who baptize infants and do not practice

immersion.⁶⁰ Their argument has historical grounding. Reconciling the meaning and purpose of baptism was part of the early struggles of the restoration movement. Both Stone and the Campbell's wavered on whether or not believer's baptism by immersion should be the only accepted form. Early on Stone was comfortable with infant baptism but was persuaded to change to immersion by Alexander Campbell. Stone also differed from his colleagues in that he did not believe that a primary purpose of baptism was for membership in the body of Christ. He believed that baptism was personal and was an opportunity for the individual to confess Christ and wash their sins away.⁶¹

The movement split into two strands early on: the Churches of Christ and The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The split grew from theological differences that had to do with the interpretation of scripture, baptism and music. The fundamental difference on baptism was that the Churches of Christ emphasis was on what a person's "knowledge was at the time of baptism."⁶² In other words it was not enough to be a believer, to fully confess, and to repent of sin if one did not obey God by being immersed in baptism they were not saved. Baptism by immersion was an act of obedience. The Disciples of Christ biggest issue rested on membership. If a person was not baptized by immersion could they be full members of the church.⁶³ If a person was baptized in a different tradition and then sought to join The Disciples of Christ should they be required to be re-baptized? Especially if that tradition did not practice immersion.

First Christian Olympia was not immune from the controversy. Up until the late 1970's members were required to be baptized by immersion. If someone transferred their membership

⁶⁰ "Renewal Group Wary of Unity." *Christianity Today*, December 11, 1995.
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1995/december11/5te71a.html>

⁶¹ Foster, *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, 60.

⁶² Foster, 61.

⁶³ Foster, 62.

from an outside denomination, they were required to be re-baptized even if they came from a tradition that immersed. Children were not allowed to partake in communion until they were baptized. By the late 1970's the congregation was willing to accept any believer's baptism by immersion, but still wrestled with whether those who were unimmersed should be allowed membership. In 1992 the bylaws were revised to say that baptism was required for membership, immersion was our tradition, but other forms would be accepted. No re-baptism would be required. A person only needs show evidence that they had been baptized for membership. In the 2011 revision the requirement of baptism for membership was removed. This was a significant conversation and step forward in re-imagining membership.

Section C The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a celebration of commemoration, thanksgiving and fellowship in which the congregation participates weekly as the central part of the regular worship service. It is open to all who wish to partake. The Lord's Supper may be celebrated at other times and places in forms appropriate to the occasion.

A great debate over whether to change the terminology took place during the 2011 revision. The discussion rested on what theological implications were made in the term The Lord's Supper versus Communion. The younger members of the team were uncomfortable with Lord's Supper believing that it locked them into a very specific understanding of who Jesus is and what communion means. They argued that if we were to live into our Who We Are statement that claimed a willingness to walk with each other in our faith journey that we must create language that recognizes that the journey is very different for some. Those who struggle with whether Jesus is fully human or fully divine or both would struggle with calling communion The Lord's Supper. The older members told stories of their faith and what the terminology meant to them. For them it was an inclusive invitation. Lord was not necessarily a reference to Jesus but was claiming that the meal belonged to God therefore the invitation to all who were willing

to come was not our invitation but first God's. The decision was made to keep The Lord's Supper language. The priority was to assure that communion was a part of every Sunday morning worship service in keeping with the Disciple's tradition.

ARTICLE III MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

Being in a covenant relationship is a commitment to honor and support each other in our individual life journeys as we worship together and seek answers to life's questions. This commitment includes attendance in worship, involvement in learning, and support of the church's mission through personal involvement and financial giving.

This is arguably the most significant change made during the 2011 revision process. Prior to 2011 the bylaws language on membership was steeped in old institution. It was a list of requirements for membership that included: baptism, public confession of faith, tithing 10% of household income, regular attendance and participation in worship, Sunday School and other church related activities, a willingness to serve or take on leadership roles. The willingness to not only engage in conversation around membership, but also to make significant revisions to the bylaws was a major achievement toward dismantling the institution – laying the groundwork for deeper conversation and a re-imaging of membership.

NEW ARTICLE IV SAFE CHURCH POLICY

It is our desire that First Christian Church be a safe place for all people; safe from any threat of abuse, where the infinite value of each person is honored, and relationships are open, honest and respectful. This safe environment reflects the love of God as we understand it most fully through Jesus who is the Christ and provides a rich context for spiritual growth. We recognize that we live in a culture where violence, disrespect, and abuse are too common and there is a potential for them to find their way into our churches. It is with this understanding and a strong desire to create a safe place for persons who enter our building that First Christian Church will have in place a safe church policy.

The safe church policy is a new addition to the bylaws. Prior to 2011 the congregation had not conceived of a need for safe church policy. Their Sunday morning children's program was taught by one adult who they paid to be a nursery attendant/children's worship hour teacher.

They had no more than 2 children in worship at that time. It did not cross their minds that having one adult remove children during worship to go upstairs in a very old building that had no telephones and was visually excluded from the worship space was unsafe. In a fantastic example of old institution thinking they had to be convinced of the necessity of such a policy. In 2011 we had yet to have the amount of mass shootings and could not have conceived that anyone would walk into a place of faith and commit horrible acts of violence. It was beyond their imaginations to believe that a person who wanted to work with children might not have the purest intentions. The idea of requiring background checks on anyone who was working with children was a new and alarming concept.

ARTICLE V STRUCTURE

Section A The Congregation

1. Authority of Congregation

- a. The congregation has authority to approve and revise the annual budget, call ordained staff, elect congregational Board officers, and approve Bylaws revisions.*
- b. The congregation may delegate other responsibilities and authority to the Board.*

First Christian Church like all congregations within the Disciples of Christ is congregationalist. Congregations have the sole authority to call their own ministers, govern, own their building, set their own budgets. The relationship to the General Church and Regional Church is covenantal. The challenge in dismantling the institution within this context is to do so without dismantling the congregational authority.

2. Congregational Meetings

- a. An annual business meeting of the congregation will be held prior to the beginning of the fiscal year for the purpose of reviewing and adopting the proposed budget, receiving reports, and acting upon recommendations. The date, time, and place will be determined by the Board.*
- b. Special meetings of the congregation will be determined by the Board and called by the Moderator of the congregation. The Moderator will call a special meeting upon receipt of a petition signed by at least ten percent of the congregation. These meetings will be set within a thirty-day time frame with at least a two-week notice.*

- c. *Notice for regular or special congregational meetings will be in writing and will contain the time, date, place, and purpose of the meeting.*
- d. *A quorum will consist of those in attendance after due notice for the meeting has been given.*
- e. *The agenda for congregational meetings will be confined to those matters directly related to the publicized purpose of the meeting.*
- f. *A simple majority of those present will be sufficient for the approval of any item of business excluding the calling of a pastor (see Article V Personnel, Section An Ordained Ministerial Staff, 2. Selection and Employment, e. “two-thirds majority”).*

In the old institution model the rules for congregational meetings make sense and are clear.

Missing in this list of rules is any instruction or language about the spirituality of governance.

The congregation is simply to vote yay or nay on items of business. There is nothing that suggests prayer or discernment has a place within the meeting. There is no place for community celebration or recognition. The meetings are simply business meetings, and over the past 10 years have been held in the sanctuary immediately following worship and last no more than 5 minutes. There is opportunity to re-imagine congregational involvement. The Church is congregationalist in business, but not in spiritual practice.

Section B The Board

1. Membership of the Board

- a. *Elected members of the Board will include: Moderator, Vice Moderator, Worship Coordinator, Word Coordinator, Deed Coordinator, Property Coordinator, Moderator of the Elders, and Moderator of the Deacons.*
- b. *The^[SEP]Pastor will be a member of the Board.*
- c. *The officers will be elected for a term of one year by the congregation at or prior to its annual meeting.*
- d. *The secretary to the Board will be appointed by the Moderator and function in a clerical capacity.*

This is the streamlined version of the board that was created in 2009. It is not an accurate representation of the make-up of the board today. There is still old-institutional hang-overs, and

the titles are no longer accurate. Deed was changed to LOFT: living out Faith Team and Word was changed to Education. There has not been a moderator of the deacons for many years. Currently the board has co-moderators, co-moderator's of the elders, and no moderator of the deacons, co-chairs of worship and a property coordinator. The secretarial duties have fallen to a board member rather than to be appointed from the larger body.

There is opportunity to explore leadership roles and the way in which the board can most effectively represent the congregation. Is this model of leadership the most effective in the current context or are the roles too closely tied to another era and time?

2. Authority and Responsibilities

- a. The officers elected by the congregation will serve as the trustees of the corporation. They are given the power and authority to execute all legal documents and perform other necessary duties and responsibilities of the corporation.*
- b. The Board has the authority to make decisions on behalf of the congregation on policies, programs and business matters intended to fulfill the purposes of the congregation.*
- c. The Board will set up the necessary organization to fulfill the purposes of the congregation plus other responsibilities delegated to it by the congregation.*
- d. The Board, through the Moderator, will refer to the congregation any decision appealed by ten percent of the participating members of the congregation.*
- e. Chairs of special committees, task force groups, representatives to community organizations, and a church historian may be chosen as needed by the Moderator and approved by the Board.*
- f. Board Coordinators will appoint the members of their committees.*
- g. Duties of elected officers are listed in the Standing Rules.*
- h. Delegates to the regional and national Disciples' assemblies will be appointed by the Moderator and approved by the Board.*

There was a time when the board of trustees was separate from the church board creating a laborious process of governance. To make any decision required each board's approval making it impossible to move quickly and decisively on any matter. In this revision the board is combined into one and is given the authority to set policy and to execute all legal documents. A concern is

that there is not wording or indication of the spirituality of decisions. There is nothing in these bylaws that sets a tone for how to approach the business of the church from a Spirit centered, loving way. Much is left to assumption. We assume that people will do so. However, history has shown that not everyone has a purely spiritual motive. In past years board members have used the bylaws as a way to have power and to impose their rules. A conversation about community, covenant and our relationship to each other and to God would be appropriate within this context.

3. Succession in Office

The Moderator, Vice Moderator and Coordinators may serve up to three consecutive one-year terms in their elected positions.

4. Meetings

- a. Regular meetings of the Board will be called by the Moderator at a place, time, and date determined by the Board.
- b. Special meetings of the Board will be called by the Moderator.
- c. Notice of all regular or special meetings of the Board will be given to all members of the Board prior to such meeting stating date, time, and place, and purpose.
- d. All interested members of the congregation may attend meetings of the Board, listen to the discussion, and, upon invitation by the Moderator, express their thoughts and opinions. They may not make a motion or cast a vote.
- e. A quorum will consist of a minimum of five members in attendance after required notice has been given.
- f. Board meetings will be conducted by consensus rules adopted by the Board guided by a consensus model. (see Appendix B)

Significant in this section is the adoption of the consensus model. A great deal of thought and research went into the decision. Recognizing the possibility that within a consensus model people could take advantage of allowing all voices to be heard the team wrote guidelines for how consensus would work. They also adopted an adaptation of Robert's Rules of Order called Martha's Rules to be used in the event that consensus could not be achieved. The group was

thoughtful and intentional about identifying the masculine hierarchy present in Robert's Rules and spent a great deal of time reconciling a new approach.

5. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year will be July 1 to June 30.

Olympia is the Capitol of Washington State. A large percentage of the population is employed by the State. The majority of the congregation is made up of State employees and former State employees. It is not surprising that they chose the fiscal year to be concurrent with the States rather than with the federal tax year. Although it has caused some issues filing payroll taxes and it means the annual stewardship campaign falls in the middle of Lent or on Easter there was no will to make a change.

Section C Spiritual Leaders

1. *The spiritual leaders will consist of Elders and Deacons. Junior Deacons may be appointed by the Moderator of the Diaconate.*
2. *The spiritual leaders will be elected for a term of three (3) years (approximately one third of each group each year) by the congregation at or prior to its annual meeting.*
3. *The Moderator of the Elders or Diaconate may approve a one-year hiatus to an Elder or Deacon wishing to take time off within a term of service.*
4. *The life-time honorary title of Elder Emeritus or Deacon Emeritus may be bestowed by a vote of the congregation upon any person who has served faithfully, continuously, and conscientiously but is unable to continue due to age, health or disability.*

The 2011 bylaws revision team almost came to blows over the identification of Spiritual leaders. Traditionally within the Disciples of Christ the role of elder has been identified as spiritual leader and deacon as a faithful servant – the worker. Elders and deacons came together in service to take communion to the homebound once a month. One elder would be paired with

one deacon and they would be assigned a certain number of people to visit following worship on the designated Sunday. Often there would be multiple teams that would go out. Other than that, the Elders and Deacons roles were separate. The deacons job was to prepare communion, set up communion and to take the offering each Sunday. The elders were to serve at the communion table offering prayers for the cup and for the wine. They were also responsible for the invitation to offering. In some congregations the elders presided over communion and the pastor did not participate. This was in keeping with the Campbell's insistence that laity could and should participate fully at the table. In the Restoration movement ministers presiding over the table was leaning toward hierarchy.

First Christian held with tradition until 2006. They had dwindled in size and were having a difficult time filling positions. Both elders and deacons had to be voted on at the annual congregational meeting. There were elaborate rotating schedules in place that required the deacons have an active membership of 16 and the elders of 20. In 2006 there were only 40 active members. The duties of the deacons and elders began to be muddled together. Elders were filling in for deacons on a regular basis. A decision was made to combine their monthly meetings into one gathering. One elder and one deacon were required to sign up to provide meal each month. In 2011 under a new moderator of the elders leadership they stopped the monthly meeting. It had become too much of a burden on the aging group to provide a meal every month. The elders and deacons agreed to meet separately once more.

The bylaws team were split on whether it was appropriate to call the deacons spiritual leaders. Traditionally this was a term reserved for the minister and the elders. It carried implications. There were many people who liked the work of serving as deacon. They liked being behind the

scenes. Being named a spiritual leader was prohibitive to them serving. Some believe that they were not worthy of the title. Others believed it to be an honor. Serving with hands and feet was spiritual and demonstrating that service in front of the congregation each week was a form of spiritual leadership. The team spent several weeks debating this issue. Part of the discussion revolved around whether once an elder always an elder or if a person could stop. It was a question of boundaries. If someone no longer wanted to serve as an elder would we let them go. The older members argued that no we would not. “once an elder always an elder.” They believed that you could rotate off and take a break from serving on Sunday mornings, but a person would always be an elder. Newer congregants were quite troubled by this idea hearing it as a life sentence.

Although these rules are modernized to some extent (e.g. the term deaconess was removed and replaced with diaconate.) they still are most fully aligned with old institution’s value that it is a privilege to serve. Thus, the need to vote deacons and elders into service rather than using the language of calling. And that a person might be allowed to take a year off if the moderator approved. Even the concept of emeritus is tied to the privilege of serving.

Section D Auxiliary Groups

Auxiliary groups (e.g. Disciples Women’s Ministries, Disciples Men’s groups, youth groups etc.) will be organized under their own rules, elect their own officers, and report as needed to the Board.

Section E Consideration for Election as Board Officers, Elders, and Diaconate will be given to members best fulfilling the following criteria:

1. A covenantal relationship in the congregation with regular attendance and participation in the worship services and mission of the church.
2. Willingness and ability to fulfill the duties assigned to that office.

3. Regular contributor to the financial support of the congregation and its mission.

These considerations are deeply steeped in a traditional understanding of membership. It does reflect the teams honest effort to address membership. In the old set of bylaws number one read Must be a member in good standing. Number three is involved a brief discussion about tithing and the damage the historical Church has done in dealing with money. This is a genuine attempt to lighten the language around tithing without eliminating it completely. Problematic is that financial support is listed as a requirement rather than part of what it means to be in a covenantal relationship.

Section F Election Process

1. *The Nominating Task Force will consist of the Pastor and at least three other members from the congregation appointed by the Board. This task force will select a chair from among its members.*
2. *The Nominating Task Force will provide opportunity for the congregation to suggest names of participating members as nominees for all offices to be filled.*
3. *The Nominating Task Force will secure the consent of each person whose name is to appear on the final ballot. "Write-in" votes must have the consent of the nominee.*
4. *The Nominating Task Force will prepare the proposed slate of officers and oversee the preparation of the ballot for the annual election. The proposed slate will include nominees for First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Foundation directors submitted by the Foundation Board.*
5. *The Nominating Task Force will oversee the process of counting all ballots and will announce the results.*

This whole process is antiquated. Again, we see a process tied to the old institutional value believing that leadership is an honor, duty and privilege. Every year the board moderator struggles to find people willing to serve on the nominating task force. The task force struggles to find nominees to fill all the positions. Working on a plan to inspire and mentor leadership would be productive.

Section G Vacancies and Resignations

1. *In case of a vacancy or resignation in the office of Moderator of the congregation, the Vice-Moderator will complete the unexpired term of Moderator and a new Vice-Moderator be appointed by the Board.*
2. *When any other officer of the congregation resigns, or when such an office is declared vacant by the Board, such vacancy will be filled by the Board. The appointed person will serve until the next annual election.*

The entirety of Article 5 as well as the following Article 6 are based on the premise the congregation is made up of people capable, willing and honored to serve and that there are plenty of people to hold every position. They also assume that the basic foundation of the bylaws is strong and might only need the occasional revision rather than re-writing them completely

ARTICLE VI PERSONNEL

Section An Ordained Ministerial Staff (Pastor, Associate Pastors, etc.)

1. Authority and Responsibility

A job description for each ministerial staff member will be prepared during the process of selecting and employing of such person which will describe the specific responsibilities and authority for that position, plus the terms of the call (work conditions, leaves of absence, compensation, and termination procedures). This document will be reviewed annually by the Pastoral Relations Committee. Members of the Pastoral Relations Committee will be appointed by the Pastor and the Moderator.

2. Selection and Employment

- a. A Search Task Force will be selected by the Board. The membership of the Search Task Force will not exceed seven (7) persons and shall be representative of the entire congregation.
- b. The Search Task Force will utilize the services of the Regional Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for information on prospective candidates.
- c. The Search Task Force may consider information on several prospective candidates at one time. However, it will be the policy of the Board and the congregation to consider only one prospective candidate at a time, either accepting or rejecting the recommendation of the Search Task Force.
- d. The Search Task Force will first recommend a prospective candidate to the Board. Upon acceptance by the Board by consensus, the Board will then recommend the candidate to the congregation.

- e. The recommended candidate will be presented to the congregation through the model of consensus building. The candidate must be accepted by a two-thirds majority of the congregation members present in a congregational meeting before an official call may be extended.

3. Termination Procedures

Ministerial staff are called for an indefinite period of time which may be terminated by either the congregation or the staff member upon sixty (60) days written notice. This termination period may be altered by mutual agreement.

4. Termination by the Congregation

- a. Ministerial staff may be removed from their positions for any one or a combination of the following reasons: inadequate revenue in the church budget, continued neglect of duty, conduct deemed detrimental to the church, insubordination and unauthorized absences.
- b. In the event it becomes necessary to terminate the service of a ministerial staff member for any of the above reasons, the Board will meet at the earliest possible date for a hearing on the matter.
- c. The Board will have the authority to terminate the employment of ministerial staff. However, such action may be appealed to the congregation by the staff member being terminated according to the provisions calling for such a congregational meeting.
- d. Whenever it becomes necessary to consider terminating these services of a ministerial staff member for any cause, the individual may be immediately suspended with pay by the Board.
- e. Resignations by ministerial staff will be submitted in writing to the Board and announced to the congregation by the Moderator.

Section B Professional Staff (music director, organist, etc.)

1. Authority and Responsibilities

- a. A job description for professional staff will be prepared during the process of selecting and employing for that position and will be reviewed annually.
- b. The job description will describe the specific responsibilities and authority for that position, the person to whom they report, and the terms and conditions of employment (work conditions, leaves of absence, compensation, and termination procedure).

2. Selecting, Employing, and Termination

- a. The task force charged with selecting and recommending for employment of professional staff will be appointed by the Vice Moderator. This task force will consist of the Vice Moderator, senior Pastor, and other interested persons from the congregation.
- b. The task force will be responsible for preparing a job description, screening applicants for the position and recommending the employing of the selected person.
- c. The recommendation of this task force will be presented to the Board by the Vice Moderator for approval by consensus.
- d. The Vice Moderator will coordinate, in consultation with the senior minister, all personnel actions having to do with selection, employing, counseling, or dismissal of professional staff members.
- e. The Vice Moderator, in consultation with the senior minister, will have authority to immediately suspend (with/without pay) a person until such time as the Board can take action.
- f. The Board, in consultation with the senior minister, will be responsible for reviewing the termination of the person and recommending final action.
- g. Appeals of terminations, suspensions or other disciplinary actions will be heard by the Board.

Section C Support Staff (Administrative Assistant, Custodian, etc.)

1. Authority and Responsibilities

- a. A job description for each support staff member (whether full-time or part-time) will be prepared during the process of selecting and employing for that position and will be reviewed annually. This job description will describe the specific responsibilities and authority for that position, plus the terms and conditions of employment (work conditions, leaves of absence, compensation and termination procedure).
- b. The job description shall indicate the person, committee or board to whom the staff member is directly responsible. This person or body shall be authorized to make work assignments, evaluate performance, and (if necessary) recommend the termination of the staff member's employment.
- c. The Vice Moderator will have coordinating responsibility of personnel matters involving the support staff.

2. Selecting, Employing, and Terminating

- a. The task force charged with selecting and recommending for employment of support staff will be appointed by the Vice Moderator. This task force will consist of the Vice Moderator, Senior Pastor, and other interested persons from the congregation.
- b. The task force will be responsible for preparing a job description, screening applicants for the position, and recommending the employing of the selected person.
- c. The recommendation of this task force will be presented to the Board for final approval by consensus.
- d. The Vice Moderator will coordinate, in consultation with the senior Pastor, all personnel actions having to do with selection, employing, counseling, or dismissal of non-ministerial staff members.

- e. The Vice Moderator, in consultation with the minister, will have authority to immediately suspend (with/without pay) a person until such time as the Board can take action.
- f. The Board will be responsible for reviewing termination of the person and recommending final action.
- g. Appeals of terminations, suspensions, or other disciplinary actions will be heard by the Board.

ARTICLE VII INDEMNIFICATION OF OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES

To the extent permitted by law, this corporation will indemnify and exonerate its officers and employees from all judgments, amounts paid in settlement and all reasonable expenses (including attorney fees), resulting from or caused by any act undertaken by or any omission not undertaken by any such director, officer or employee when in good faith carrying out the business of the corporation or acting in its behalf.

ARTICLE VIII AMENDMENTS

- 1. These Bylaws may be amended or repealed by a majority of the members of the congregation present at any regular or special congregation meeting, provided that notice of intention to make, amend or repeal these Bylaws at such meeting will have been included in the publicized purpose for the meeting.
- 2. Usually such amendments will have been studied and accepted by the Board before being referred to the congregation for final approval. The only exception to this procedure will be upon presentation of a petition for amendment signed by ten percent of the participating members and calling for a congregational meeting for consideration of same.
- 3. A task force will review these Bylaws and present amendments or revisions to the Board as necessary. The Board may refer proposed amendments from other sources for review by the Bylaws Review Task Force.

APPENDIX A

Trust Agreement and Deed of Trust

Appendix B Consensus Model

Guiding Principles

"Every decision we make is something we have to work with, so it seems essential to us that we

understand and have a commitment to the things we decide. We recognize that consensus decision-making, while it generates high-quality decisions, takes a lot of time and energy. Some decisions are simply not worth the effort. So, we developed a way to test whether an issue was important enough to warrant taking the extra time to develop consensus while the decision was being discussed."

There are certain skills the participants must share for the process to be most effective.

1. The participants must be willing and able to listen carefully to what others are saying.
2. The participants must be trusting and brave enough to speak their minds.
3. The participants must care about the group's welfare as well as their own
4. The participants must, when necessary, be willing to shed personal attachments to pet ideas.

The five steps are a framework and need not be followed to the letter. They have proven to be helpful in focusing discussion.

1. Preparation
2. Generating proposals
3. Developing concrete and viable proposals

4. Decision Making

- a) a poll to determine how the group feels about the proposal
 - b) a vote where those who are uncomfortable with the proposal have a chance to discuss their feelings and where the group can decide on whether or not to override the consensus process and vote on the proposal
5. Implementing and reviewing.

1. PREPARATION

All participants should be familiar with the topic, but if not, the facilitator can plan an agenda, and estimate time limits for discussion. When participants have agreed about these, they can continue to step 2.

2. GENERATING PROPOSALS

When there is not a specific proposal, this step allows open discussion of issues and generation of alternatives, including possible effects and implications of various actions.

3. MAKING PROPOSALS CONCRETE

Take ideas and create one or more proposals. Find how group feels about budget, resources, division of labor, goals, assumptions, etc. Distinguish questions of principle from those of practical details. See who is willing to work if proposal is accepted.

4. DECISION MAKING

A) taking a poll to discover how the group feels about the proposal.

- 1) the facilitator states the proposal
- 2) the facilitator takes a hand count on the following:
 - Who likes the proposal?
 - Who can live with the proposal?
 - Who is uncomfortable with the proposal?

Consensus may be reached at this point.

3) these steps are repeated if there are multiple proposals on a particular topic.

Interpretation of the results includes looking for a balance. If most are 'uncomfortable' or 'can live with it', the proposal should probably be scratched. Discussion is encouraged. The sense poll identifies those who are willing to support and work on a proposal, and who is apathetic or willing to go along. A person may state "uncomfortable" if they want to say more about the topic. The proposal with the most positive poll results is usually the one most likely to be implemented. The decision can be moved to a vote if the group decides to override the consensus process.

B) taking a vote. Find out what the "uncomfortable" are uncomfortable about and see if the group is willing to decide by majority rule.

- 1) those who are uncomfortable are asked to state their reasons why
- 2) vote on the question: "Should we implement this decision over the stated objection of the minority, when a majority of us think that it is workable?" "Yes" means one favors majority rule, "no" means postponing the decision.

If there are more "yes" votes, the proposal passes. If more "no" votes, the proposal is defeated, and the group is faced with several options:

- a) generate a new proposal, taking into account the objections of the "uncomfortable"
- b) continue discussing until enough people change their minds.
- c) accept that the issue can't be decided at this time or should be rejected.

5. IMPLEMENTING AND REVIEWING

Be sure everyone is clear on precisely what was decided. Then answer the questions:

What is to be done?

Who is to do it?

What criteria will be used to determine when the job is done?

Will the decision need to be reviewed?

Adapted from Martha's Rules of Order

Martha's Rules of Order were developed as an alternative to Robert's Rules of Order as a method for group decision making. They were established at Martha's Co-Op in Madison, Wisconsin in the 1970s.

Appendix B

Phase One -Disciples 101

Week one – Who Are We?

Disciples identity statement - A movement for Wholeness in a fragmented world

The focus of week one is to help the congregation understand our connection to the General Church. Many of our newer congregants have no history with the denomination, and many of our older members history is steeped in a traditional understanding of how the denomination functions and do not understand the changes that have occurred over the past thirty years.

This week they will be introduced to the Disciples of Christ mission statement – “A movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.”⁶⁴ A brief history of the denominational formation introducing the 4 founders of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ): Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, Thomas Campbell and Walter Scott. The objective is to connect the current mission statement to the historical mission and vision of the movement.

Week two- The General Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ):

There are currently fifteen general ministries: Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries; Chalice Press; Christian Church Foundation; Council on Christian Unity; Disciples Church Extensions Fund; Disciples Home Missions; Disciples Women; Disciples of Christ Historical Society; Global Ministries; Helm; Hope Partnership for Missional Transformation; National Benevolent Association; National Convocation; NAPAD; Pension Fund. The goal in week two is to name each one and briefly discuss the congregation’s history and connection or lack of

⁶⁴ “Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada,” Disciples.org, n.d., <https://disciples.org/>.

connection to each one. For example, Helm is the ministry for higher education. First Christian Olympia has always placed a value on higher learning. The congregation has a scholarship foundation that has help fund hundreds of seminary student's education throughout the years. The commitment to education is deeply rooted in its Disciples heritage. Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone both believed in the importance of education. As a result, there are seventeen colleges, universities and seminaries in the United States affiliated with the Disciples. There are several more with whom the Disciples have developed a relationship and presence.⁶⁵

The objective this week is to help the congregation understand the scope of ministries and their connection historically and presently, as well as understanding how the ministries themselves help to fulfill a vision rooted in the original formation of the movement, as well as the current vision and mission.

Week three – History of the Chalice – symbolizes the centrality of communion in our worship; the cross of the Disciple Andrew serves as a reminder of the “ministry of each person and the importance of evangelism.”⁶⁶ Objective 1: connecting to identity; Objective 2: understanding the power of symbol and ritual; Objective 3: understand the theology of communion as the center of worship.

Week four – The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) – read the preamble. History of the restructure. Objective 1: to understand Disciples concept of Unity; Objective 2: understand the significance of a covenantal relationship

Week five – The Four Priorities: 1. Becoming a Pro-reconciling/Anti-racist church 2. Formation of 1,000 new congregations by 2020 3. Transformation of 1,000 current

⁶⁵ “Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.”

⁶⁶ “The Chalice,” Disciples.org, accessed November 12, 2018, <https://disciples.org/our-identity/the-chalice/>.

congregations by 2020 4. Leadership development necessary to realize these new and renewed congregations.⁶⁷ Objective 1: to understand the importance of the priorities; Objective 2: to recognize how FCC plays a part in the priorities s and to think about ways we might more fully live them out.

Week six – Structure – General Church; Regional Church – How are Northwest Region is changing – it is in the process of merging with the Montana region. How is that consistent with our history?

Objective 1: to recognize that adaptive change has always been a part of our denomination.
Objective 2: to locate FCC within the denominational structure.

Week seven – General Assembly – offer a brief history of how assemblies came into being. Describe the different types of resolutions. Tell the story of the 1992 Kansas City assembly and the impact on the denomination and the historic connection between that assembly and FCC.
Objective 1: understand the basics of Disciples polity; Objective 2: to recognize the differences in resolutions and their effects on congregations.

Week eight – Leadership – General Minister and President, Regional Minister, General Board, Regional Board, Regional ministries. Objective 1: to understand the roles of General and Regional Church leaders; Objective 2: to locate ourselves within the ministries.

Phase Two – Disciples 2.0

Week one – The four founders: Barton W. Stone, Alexander Campbell, Thomas Campbell.
Objective 1: the congregation will be able to name the 4 founders of the denomination; Objective 2: the congregation will be able to name the basic beliefs that brought them together; Objective 3: the congregation will understand what Second Great Awakening means.

⁶⁷ “The Four Priorities of The Church,” Disciples.org, accessed November 13, 2018, <https://disciples.org/our-identity/the-four-priorities-of-the-church/>.

Week two – Barton W. Stone – The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery. The Christian Messenger – “Let Unity be our Polar Star.”⁶⁸ Cane Ridge Revival Objective 1: to know the difference between “stoneite” and “Campbellite.” Objective 2 – Understand the risk of faith to allow something precious to die that it might live.

Week three -Thomas Campbell – the Declaration and Address. “The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one.”⁶⁹ Objective 1: understand the historical importance of Thomas Campbell’s contribution to the movement. Objective 2: recognize the pattern of endings and beginnings within the movement

Week four – Walter Scot – Evangelist – Evangelism. Cane Ridge. An overview of his role in the movement. Objective 1: to understand the importance of evangelism. Objective 2: understand the importance of living our faith beyond our walls.

Week five – Alexander Campbell – “Campbellites” – overview of Campbell’s contributions. Alexander Campbell is perhaps the most recognizable name of the four. Most of the Disciples congregations consider themselves “campbellites, “but what does that really mean? Campbell and creeds. “No creed but Christ”⁷⁰ Slavery. Education. Objective 1: to understand Campbells fundamental beliefs and how they shaped the denomination. Objective 2: recognize his influence on the shaping of FCC.

Week six – Cane Ridge Revival, 1801–where is it? What happened? Did people really bark like dogs? Objective 1: to understand the freedom the Spirit offers. Objective 2: to understand the connection between the Great Revival of the West and FCC.

⁶⁸ D. Newell Williams, *Barton Stone: A Spiritual Biography* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000).

⁶⁹ Foster, *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, 264.

⁷⁰ Foster, 254.

Week seven -What's in a name? – How we became The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

What the parenthesis means. Objective 1: understand the historical meaning of the name.

Objective 2: to understand where FCC feels most connected.

Week eight – Schism – a brief history of how The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the

Churches of Christ split. Objective 1: to understand how theological divides hurt everyone.

Objective 2: to understand more fully the importance of the congregational theology of

Welcome, open and affirming.

Appendix C

Phase Three – Leadership Study

The leadership study is intended to be six weeks. Each weekly session is 3 hours in length. Participants include the church board and the church elders and deacons for a total of 20. The first 5 sessions will be held in the church library. The sixth session to meet at our regional Camp and Conference grounds which is nearby. Each session begins with a meditation on Jesus feeding the crowd. (adapted from *And Still We Rise*)⁷¹ Participants are invited to consider the different hungers that are present in the story, and where they see abundance. A different Gospel version is read each week. This creates a weekly ritual and will be used as an example of ritual.

Each week will focus on a different aspect of the 5 D cycle. Week one will be an introduction to the cycle, the concept of historical and sociological new institutionalism, the 3 N's and how we will be working over the course of the 6 weeks. A large part of the time in session one will be creating an historical time line to be used for the bylaws deep analysis.

Week one-

- Meditation – Matthew 14:13-21(15 minutes)
- Ritual and Tradition
- Lens's for analysis: 1. Sociological institutionalism 2. Historical institutionalism (15 minutes)
 - a. How did we get here? The history leading up to incorporation. – Creating a timeline
 - b. Identify early values

Closing Meditation – Exodus 14:15-16 (15 minutes)

Week two-

- Meditation – Luke 9: 10-17 (15 minutes)

⁷¹ Bohren, Jha, and Pociecha, *And Still We Rise*, 5.

- Recap – Ritual and Tradition (10 minutes)
- Recap - 1. Sociological institutionalism 2. Historical institutionalism (15 minutes)
- Bylaws – Article I Who We Are, Section A Welcoming Community, Section B Open and Affirming (50)

a. How did we get here? Sharing our memory of these two statements. Share what they mean to you?

c. How is Welcoming and Openness consistent or inconsistent with Disciples history and values?

Bylaws – Article II – Rituals and Traditions

- Bylaws – Article II Rituals and Traditions (75)
 - a. Confession of Faith – does this have value for you personally? What is your experience with confession?
 - b. Baptism- Share the history of baptism within the Restoration movement, the denomination, the congregation. 1. What is your personal experience with baptism?
 - c. The Lord’s Supper: communion or Lord’s Supper? Does it make a difference? 1. Share personal experience of communion.
 - a. Are these rituals an external reflection of our internal values?
 - b. Are there other traditions or rituals that we practice that are missing from this section? How do they reflect our values?
 - c. Are there rituals and traditions that we do not practice well that you believe capture our values? What’s missing?

Closing Meditation – Hebrews 13:2 (15 minutes)

Closing Prayer

Week three-

- Meditation – Mark 6:30-44 (15 minutes)
- Recap of prior week (5 minutes)

Bylaws Article III Membership Covenant (80 minutes)

What is the cultural understanding of membership today? What was it historically?

What does covenant mean? Does it feel different to have a covenant versus a contract?

Closing Meditation – Mark 1:9-11 (15 minutes)

Week four –

- Meditation – John 6:1-14 (5 minutes)
- Creating a Spiritual practice through mini habits (5 minutes)
- Recap of prior week (5 minutes)
- History of membership and institution (10 minutes)
- Theology of Covenant (10 minutes)
- Bylaws – Article III Membership Covenant (80 minutes)
 - a. Does membership matter to you? How? Why?
 - b. What are the benefits of the terminology? What are the negatives?
 - c. What does covenant mean to you?
 - d. Can we imagine community without membership? What does that look like? What is it called?
- Closing Meditation – Exodus 14:15-16 (5 minutes)

Week five –

- Meditation – Matthew 14:13-21; Luke 9:10-17 (15 minutes)
- Creating a Spiritual practice through mini habits (5 minutes)
- Recap prior week (15 minutes)
- What is a calling? (15 minutes)
- Bylaws The Board – A discussion on leadership (50 minutes)
 - a. How is the current leadership structure effective? Where are the gaps?
 - b. Are all leaders spiritual leaders? Should they be? Is there a place for calling in lay leadership?
Do you feel called?
 - c. Can you imagine a different way to lead?

Closing Meditation – John 20:19-23 (15 minutes)

Week Six-

- Meditation – Mark 6:30-44; John 6:1-14 (5 minutes)
- The importance of Voice (30 minutes)
 - a. Describe a time in church (worship or other activities) when you felt especially connected to God. Can you talk about what you felt, what made it possible?
 - b. Describe a time when you felt unheard. What did that feel like?
 - c. Describe a time when you found your voice. What made it possible?
 - d. Describe a time when you saw someone no one else noticed. What made you notice that person?
- Lectio Divina (5 minutes)
- Identifying Core Values (30 minutes)
 - a. What is the most significant core value you hold?
 - b. How do you see it reflected in the congregation?
 - c. What is the most significant core value of FCC?

- d. How do you see it reflected within yourself?
- Lectio Divina (5 minutes)
- What Might be? (20 minutes)
 - a. Name one small change within the church structure that would make it easier for you or for someone who is not seen or heard to come enter into the covenantal community.
 - b. Name something that seems impossible, but you find exciting that the church could do?
 - c. Name one small act that you might do to share your faith in the world
 - d. Name one ridiculously big act you wish you could do to share your faith in the world.
 - e. What are the obstacles that prevent you? That prevent the church?
 - f. Name one small thing we could change today?
 - g. Name one big thing that seems impossible to change today?
- Lectio Divina (5 minutes)
- Write it! Imagine you could change the bylaws (20 Minutes)
 - a. Write three new articles (can be headings only) for FCC based on everything you have heard and everything we have said
 - b. conclusion

Closing Prayer

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